The UN Reviews and What Should be Done to Improve the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel?[1]

Introduction

This policy brief notes recent strategic reviews which address United Nations safety and security, remarks on those reviews' shared themes and conclusions and further elaborates on what, in the light of these, could be done to improve the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel.

Three crucial reviews related to United Nations safety and security materialized during 2015. The first was *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people* (HIPPO Report) of 17 June 2015;[2] the second was the Report of the Secretary-General on *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations* of 2 September 2015;[3] and the third was the Report of the Secretary-General on the *Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel* of 21 September 2015.[4]

A Common Theme

The need for the United Nations to ensure that its safety and security measures are keeping up with developments in the operational environment was

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[1] One of the key contributions by the Challenges Forum for enhancing safety and security for UN and Associated Personnel include the Tokyo Challenges Seminar and Report 2001, findings of which were included in the Report of the Secretary-General, A/55/977, 1 June 2001, on *Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, and a formal document of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, entitled *Letter dated 21 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*, A/55/950–S/2001/512, 23 May 2001.

[2] United Nations, *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people*, A/70/95-S2015/446, 17 June 2015 (hereafter referred to as the HIPPO Report).

[3] United Nations, *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/357-S/2015/682, 2 September 2015.

[4] United Nations, *Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/383, 21 September 2015.

About the author

Mr William R. Phillips serves with the UN Department of Safety and Security on the Integration Project since returning from Mali, where he was Chief of Staff of MINUSMA. Prior to this, Mr Phillips served with the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support. During 16 years of service with the UN, Mr Phillips has focused on peacekeeping risk management in the areas of military planning, emergency preparedness/management, and safety and security. Mr Phillips was a career officer of the United States Army, including serving in the UN from 1999-2002 as Chief of Military Planning.

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a common, general theme of the three reports. Direct and indirect security threats continue to evolve, increasing the risk to United Nations and associated personnel. The United Nations has adapted to maintain risk-acceptable operational environments, enabling mandate implementation and other activities. Security challenges will however continue to increase in complexity and scale; underlining the importance of the United Nations and Member States to continue to proactively address those challenges.[5]

The Context

Since 2013, the global number of conflicts has grown with increased security challenges to United Nations and associated personnel. In United Nations security terms, threats include armed conflict, terrorism, civil disturbance and criminal activity. In many situations these threats are compounded by overlapping interests and objectives amongst criminal, terrorist and armed groups. Interests and objectives involved may be either competitive or complimentary. Moreover, the core causes of conflicts tend to be long-standing and with deep political, social, economic and transnational roots, as the situations in for example the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan demonstrate. In this environment, the United Nations becomes a direct target for attack by groups that see the United Nations presence as detrimental to their interests and objectives. What is more, as the HIPPO Report states, two thirds of current peacekeepers are deployed in situations of ongoing conflict.[6]

Aggravating the situation for peacekeeping missions, many of the areas of deployment are characterized by inadequate infrastructure, a limited number of local commercial vendors with the capacity to support the missions, and, in some cases, by long lines of communication. Mission Support faces immense logistical support challenges, particularly in the areas of engineering, medical support, ground transportation and aviation, which impact on the establishment of an effective safety and security infrastructure.

The United Nations is increasingly adapting to the new context. With strong Member State support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Field Support (DFS) and Department of Safety and Security (DSS) have designed and implemented safety and security risk management measures which on the whole have proven effective in maintaining a risk-acceptable operational environment, enabling the Organization to 'stay and deliver'. But, global security threats and risks will continue to evolve for the foreseeable future and United Nations safety and security measures must stay ahead of that evolution.

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[5] HIPPO Report, paragraphs 26 and 29-32; Report of the Secretary-General, *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, paragraphs 103-109; Report of the Secretary-General, *Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel*, paragraphs 4-9.
[6] HIPPO Report, paragraph 273.

What Should be Done?

To address future threats and reduce security risks, the UN needs to strengthen, expand or establish a number of activities and capacities.

Ultimately, the best way of ensuring the safety of United Nations and associated personnel is to advance peace and stability in the country where they are deployed. Accordingly, and as emphasized in the different reviews of 2015, the importance of prevention and mediation must be placed at the forefront of UN efforts. Similarly, political solutions should determine the design and implementation of UN peace operations, and the whole UN system should operate in a comprehensive and integrated way, using all of its instruments flexibly in response to developments in the field.

The United Nations should continue and expand its formal and informal provision of information to Member States, the Security Council and internally within the Organization, specifying security threats and risks to the UN's activities and personnel. Security threat and risk assessments should be clearly linked to risk management measures, informing Member States and gaining their support for resources required to create and maintain a risk-acceptable operational environment. The Organization's security threat and risk reporting tends to focus on past incidents, as seen in Reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on peacekeeping missions. While potentially sensitive, consideration should be given to including forward-looking threat and risk assessments in discussions with Member States.[7]

The Organization needs to broaden the scope and sophistication of its information analysis and intelligence capacities. The United Nations requires a global information analysis and intelligence system, which operates within a policy and guidance framework and is fully integrated through close and effective information-sharing; focused upon support to United Nations field operations; and staffed with professionals in the discipline. Such an information analysis and intelligence system would: improve strategic and operational level conflict analysis,[8] essential for effective planning and implementation of peacekeeping missions; allow for regionally-focused analysis, vital to understanding transnational security threats; and harmonize and integrate the activities of mission-level information analysis and intelligence entities (i.e. Joint Mission Analysis Centres, military and police intelligence staff and units, DSS information analysis units and other mission components that contribute to safety and security threat assessments). Where appropriate and when needed, the system would interact with Member States, host governments and other international organizations both at Headquarters and in the field.

Accordingly, and as emphasized in the different reviews of 2015, the importance of prevention and mediation must be placed at the forefront of UN efforts.

[7] United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations*, 2015 substantive session, A/69/19, 17 March 2015. Paragraph 36 recommends that the Secretary-General includes …'in his annual report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, a separate section on safety and security, including database statistics on targeted attacks against United Nations peacekeeping operations, their possible causes and identifiable trends.'

[8] United Nations, *The Challenge of sustaining peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*, A/69/968-S/2015/490. Paragraphs 10-21 present a summary of strategic conflict drivers in the contemporary world.

The United Nations should model successful police and military intelligence units (as e.g. United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's (MINUSMA's) multinational All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU)) and expand their deployment to high-risk peace operations. In many Member States, these types of units represent a scarce and high-value asset which may lead Member States to be reluctant to deploy them to peace operations. Further, the deployment of sophisticated units like MINUSMA's ASIFU into United Nations missions is somewhat like sending a modern 16-cycle washing machine to an organization used to an antique hand wringer washer. Significant challenges and obstacles exist to effectively make use of intelligence units, including, but not limited to, a lack of: adequate United Nations intelligence policy and guidance as well as tactics, techniques and procedures; linkage of the intelligence process to operational planning and coordination; access clearance procedures; and secure information management systems. It is critical that the Organization works closely with Member States to overcome these challenges and develops and deploys these types of intelligence units. Similarly, as highlighted by the 2016 session of the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), modern technology can contribute to an enhanced situational awareness in the field.[9] This, in turn, requires among other things the development of a related policy framework on its use.

Mission components plan their operations and activities in accordance with their own planning methodologies and under the influence of their professional norms and culture. In higher-risk operational environments, it is often prudent to bring all relevant mission capabilities (i.e. political affairs, civil affairs, human rights, stabilization, military, police, protection of civilians, public affairs, security, mission support, etc.) to bear on a problem in a fully coordinated manner. At a mission level, such an integrated approach is fundamental to producing a viable mission concept which lays out the mission's overall end state and core objectives and specifies each component's contributions to attain those objectives. This paper asserts that, based on the experience of a number of peace operations (e.g. United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), MINUSMA, etc.), integrated all-component operational planning, coordination and implementation produce better outcomes, maximize the use of mission resources and contribute to reducing security risks to mission personnel. This is particularly important when a mission is confronting armed elements, organized crime[10] and civil disturbance. The United Nations should adopt a broadly standard methodology for integrated operational planning, coordination and implementation at the mission level, including an adequate professional civilian operational planning staff capacity.

The United Nations Secretariat has approximately 3,900 civilian international

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[9] United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations*, 2016 substantive session, A/70/19, advance unedited version, 15 March 2016.
[10] Wibke Hansen, *Interfaces Between Peace Operations and Organized Crime*, International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations Policy Brief 2015:2, addresses the implications of the HIPPO Report on UN peace operations and organized crime.

and national safety and security staff deployed in Department of Political Affairs (DPA)-led special political missions, DPKO-led missions and DFS-led mandated missions and service centres.[11] During a strategic review conducted during 2014-15, DSS recognized a paradigm shift in the global security environment and identified as one imperative the need to make better use of existing safety and security resources. DSS initiated the United Nations Secretariat Safety and Security Integration Project (UNSSSIP) to integrate the safety and security resources of DPA, DPKO, DFS and DSS under the management and accountability of DSS. Under one management authority, integration will improve the effectiveness of the delivery of safety and security services that enable mission mandate implementation and other United Nations activities and improve efficiency in the use of safety and security resources.[12] It will allow DSS to position the right safety and security staff at the right place, at the right time and with the right skills to address safety and security situations. This project began in August 2015 and is well underway. For integration to succeed, the UN and Member States should continue their strong support of UNSSSIP.

Organized crime, especially transnational organized criminal activities, may have a direct or indirect impact upon the security of United Nations personnel. Transnational organized criminal activities are far beyond normal black marketeering and involve the trafficking of drugs, weapons and, most horrifically, human beings. Due to the high payoff of this type of crime, it can involve the participation of power brokers in a country or region, even including elements of national governments. When coupled with ethnic or philosophical beliefs, transnational crime is an even greater threat to societal peace and stability. For United Nations peace operations, this form of criminality presents daunting challenges. When missions confront transnational organized crime, it is highly likely that criminal elements will respond by directly targeting United Nations personnel and activities, thus presenting a tangible threat to mission personnel or those supporting the mission (e.g. contractors and vendors). UN Nations Security Council mandates do not address this threat specifically and there is an absence of United Nations policy on how a mission should address transnational organized crime, leaving missions to chart their own approach. The United Nations should consider its role in addressing transnational crime and formulate a policy to direct the actions of peace operations.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by members of United Nations peace operations against local populations is a failure to protect the population and directly causes injury to victims. It also erodes the reputation and credibility of the United Nations. Erosion of credibility, especially in combination with violation of the population's values, will undermine people's respect for the offending organization. Where conflict-inhibiting factors are low or non-existent, individuals or groups of people, who believe that their

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[11] Approximately 1,100 safety and security staff to DPA and 2,800 staff to DPKO and DFS.
[12] UNDSS provides safety and security services in the context of the United Nations Security Management System.

values have been attacked, may come into conflict with the peace operation, possibly even igniting a chain of violence.[13] Simply put, SEA may place United Nations personnel at security risk. Given past and recent SEA caused by peace operations personnel, the United Nations Secretary-General has established a High-level Steering Group on SEA and, on 1 March 2016, appointed a Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations' response to sexual exploitation and abuse with a mandate to strengthen the Organization's response to SEA within the strategic framework provided by Security Council resolution 2272 (2016).[14] The Special Coordinator will align and build on comprehensive measures already underway in the United Nations system, including the Secretary-General's reports on special measures for protection from SEA. Member States should fully support the work of the Special Coordinator as, in the context of this background paper, success in this endeavour will reduce security risk to United Nations personnel arising from the consequences of SEA.

The Global Study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325: *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, '…contains research that comprehensively demonstrates that the participation of women at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness, success and sustainability of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts.'[15] This policy brief asserts that there is an extension of this statement in that participation of women at all levels of security risk management, in particular with regard to engagement with local civil society and other venues where local women play a leading role, indirectly enhances the security of United Nations personnel.

The International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations' Occasional Paper No. 7 on strategic communication asserts that the 'Benefits of strategic communications include improved situational awareness, information gathering, the measurement of effectiveness and enhanced safety and security of UN peacekeepers.'[16] Strategic communications at Headquarters and field levels inform audiences, including the population of countries where peacekeeping operations are deployed, of why the mission is present, what it is doing and the benefits to the country and population. A credible and continuous strategic communication programme, in the local languages, is vital to the creation of accurate and realistic public perceptions of the mission and its activities and indirectly contributes to lowering the security risk to United Nations personnel.

Mission Support is many times overlooked as a vital component of the safety and security risk management team and effort. While Mission Support contributes to many areas of risk management, two are in need of serious review

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[13] As described to the author of this background paper by Dr Moussa Ba, Head of the Critical Incident Stress Management Unit, United Nations Department of Safety and Security, New York, 1 April 2016.
[14] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2271 (2016), S/RES/2272 (2016), 11 March 2016.
[15] UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, 2015, p. 15.
[16] Robert Gordon and Peter Loge, *Strategic Communication: A Political and Operational Prerequisite for Successful Peace Operations*, International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, Occasional Paper No. 7, November 2015, p. 19.

Rapidly deploy-able engineering capabilities en-able a mission to effectively con-duct its activities from the outset and significantly enhance safety and security.

and improvement: engineering and medical support.

In missions operating in countries with low or no functioning infrastructure, engineering is not facilities and infrastructure management; it is facilities and infrastructure creation. This is important as security infrastructure is one of the first and highest priorities when a mission is deployed. Secure lines of communication and security facilities are fundamental to the mission's security and success as they lower the likelihood and impact of security incidents. However, in mission after mission (e.g. the African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), MINUSMA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), etc.), the improvement or creation of infrastructure and facilities is underestimated in terms of required effort, time and cost and often relies heavily on commercial vendor engineering capacity. The UN needs to do better in the engineering field; a mission cannot wait years to deploy and execute its mandate due to lack of field infrastructure. Rapidly deployable engineering capabilities enable a mission to effectively conduct its activities from the outset and significantly enhance safety and security. A concentrated and focused effort, including through capacity-building, by interested Member States has emerged to assist the Organization in this vital area.[17]

The second area of Mission Support that requires a comprehensive review is field medical support. Medical support is not a direct security risk reduction measure. Rather, it is a specialized function that reduces the potential impact of violent security incidents both to United Nations personnel and, in many cases, to members of the population. There is no centralized, professionally sound and coherent approach to global medical support to peace operations. Missions are largely left on their own and in many cases rely on a very small number of able but overwhelmed medical staff. C-34 underlined the importance of ensuring that missions are provided with adequate medical facilities, qualified medical personnel and the capacity for medical evacuation.[18] The United Nations should review its medical approach, especially to activities in higher-risk environments, and consider assigning clear and unambiguous accountability for medical oversight and medical field operations. Such accountability would inform medical needs analysis, resource requests and field operations to the benefit of reducing impact of security incidents and normal medical issues upon United Nations personnel.

Summary

This policy brief aims to spur discussion and action on a number of issues that affect the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel. It is not intended to be all-encompassing and reflects the experience of the author and many of his colleagues.

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[17] One initiative is the Japanese supported UN Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC). ARDEC is to enhance the capacities of African troop-contributing countries in rapidly deploying construction engineering capabilities to United Nations peacekeeping missions. See details at http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000842.html.
[18] United Nations General Assembly, A/70/19, advance unedited version, 15 March 2016.

The United Nations has done a great deal to address safety and security threats with widespread success, as noted in all three reviews of the Organization's safety and security released in 2015. However, the security threat and risk environment continues to evolve and the United Nations needs to maintain its proactive posture to determine and implement security risk management measures that will facilitate creation of a risk-acceptable operational environment.

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The Challenges Forum is a strategic and dynamic platform for constructive dialogue among leading policymakers, practitioners and academics on key issues and developments in peace operations. The Forum contributes to shaping the debate by identifying critical challenges facing military, police and civilan peace operations, by promoting awareness of emerging issues and by generating recommendations for solutions for the consideration of the broader international peace operations community. It is a global network of Partners representing 47 peace operations departments and organizations from 22 countries. www.challengesforum.org