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STANDING COMMITTEE                                   Original: ENGLISH
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STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES, INCLUDING REFUGEE SECURITY


I.  OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS OF REPORT

1.      This report provides further insight as to how UNHCR is pursuing the Global Strategic
Objective of mainstreaming security and enhancing its culture of security, in line with the
recommendations of UNHCR's Security Policy and Policy Implementation Review. [1]

2.      As part of the United Nations Security Management system, UNHCR is active in the change
process that the United Nations is currently undertaking to deliver programme activities in
challenging environments more effectively.  The Office welcomes the recent shift from a "when-to-
leave" to a "how-to-stay" approach, which will allow UNHCR managers to use security risk
management tools to enable continued programme activity by integrating security better into
programme planning.

3.      The new approach also attempts to balance appropriate mitigatory measures for staff and
beneficiary security with the critical needs of the operation.  In this regard, UNHCR must be
prepared to deploy and operate in environments where residual risks are present, even after security
strategies have been properly applied.  In determining acceptable risk, a balance must be struck
between the risks identified in the security risk assessment process and the anticipated programme
benefit.

II  CHALLENGES

4.      In February 2009, a UNHCR vehicle was ambushed in Quetta, Pakistan in broad daylight
and in close proximity to the office.  The driver was shot dead at close range while the international
staff member - the Head of UNHCR's Sub-Office - who was well known and involved with the
community, was taken hostage.  He was subsequently held captive for 63 days before being
released.  Messages from the hostage-takers at the early stages were worrisome when they
threatened to harm him if their political objectives were not met.

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[1]      See *update on staff safety and security management* (EC/54/SC/CRP.20 and EC/55/SC/CRP.21); *Staff safety and security issues, including refugee security* (EC/58/SC/CRP.13 and EC/59/SC/CRP.17).

5.      In 2008 the Head of Office of Mogadishu, Somalia (National Officer) was abducted and detained for 67 days before the United Nations successfully negotiated his release.

6.      A recent report from the Humanitarian Policy Group[2] has shown that attacks on aid workers are on the increase.  The two incidents indicated above are a clear reminder that UNHCR, while striving to remain and work in countries where security is considered to be "unstable or deteriorating", will continue to face serious security incidents.  However, the question remains as to whether the Office can cope with such challenges and can have measures in place which allow staff to feel that the risk is reduced and they are sufficiently protected.

7.      Some of the incidents and challenges which UNHCR faces are as a result of the global terrorism threat to the United Nations.  By the very nature of the Office's mandate, UNHCR staff are vulnerable as they are obliged to work in remote and unstable regions, and frequently in countries where the Office has little option but to reduce activities or relocate staff if adequate security support cannot be provided.

8.      Operating in such environments is a continuous challenge.  Mitigating risks requires more than security measures, resources and training. For example, it calls for the Office to address challenges to humanitarian space, and for various actors to acknowledge the impartiality of aid workers.  Regrettably, some of these issues cannot be resolved in the short or perhaps even medium term.  However, through the revised risk management processes that have now been adopted by the UN Security Management System, UNHCR should be more prepared to assess programmes critically and to determine more innovative ways of doing business which will improve security for both staff and beneficiaries.   UNHCR, along with other Inter-Agency Standing Committee organizations, has also embarked on various initiatives aimed at addressing the problem of shrinking humanitarian space.

9.      Although it is generally acknowledged that resources must be made available to ensure programme delivery, there continue to be significant challenges, whether in obtaining funds for an armoured car, which takes several months to procure, or for the additional blast mitigation measures required following the Independent Panel on Safety and Security (IPSS) findings.  In 2008, UNHCR contributed over USD 5 million directly to the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) budget, with additional contributions to local cost-share budgets.  These local costs are increasing as additional security measures are decided upon by UN country teams.  UNHCR, in this regard, would welcome a centralized funding mechanism for security. However because of the nature of its mandate, the Office also notes the necessity of having its own risk management approach for staff and beneficiaries, as well as the corresponding resources.  Nevertheless, the revision of the Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), their alignment with the security risk assessment and the ability of a Country Team to determine which measures apply locally are welcomed.[3]

## III  RESPONSES AND RESULTS

10.      A substantial amount of time and effort invested by many UNHCR colleagues (in addition to UNDSS expertise and the respective country UN Security Management Systems) resulted in the

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[2]      HPG Policy Brief No 34.2009 *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments* update
[3]      The UN Security Phase system is also currently under review

successful release of the two abducted staff members in Somalia and Pakistan. UNHCR rapidly deployed several staff trained in hostage incident management and negotiation skills, in addition to other technical personnel. In a continuing effort to ensure that the organization has appropriate response mechanisms, a Hostage Incident Management Training is scheduled for July 2009. During a workshop in December 2008, Senior and Regional Field Security Advisers (FSA) participated in a Critical Incident Management training. They also reviewed policy issues to enable management and security staff to improve processes and preparedness.

11.     The Workshop for Emergency Management (WEM) is UNHCR's training programme for staff who are available for rapid deployment to emergency situations. A core component of the WEM continues to be the Security module, during which staff undergo various theoretical and practical sessions to learn how to incorporate security into all elements of emergency deployment and activities. A fundamental objective of the training is to learn how to survive hostage situations. Four workshops were conducted in 2008 with a further four scheduled for 2009. Implementing partners and standby partners also participate in these training sessions. Staff members who complete the WEM are also deemed to be SSAFE-trained (Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments). This training is normally conducted by UNDSS personnel in high risk environments. As the SSAFE training is mandatory for UN staff who are to be deployed to such areas, the deployment process can be expedited. Some 160 staff are trained every year.

12.     The Security Management Learning Programme for senior and middle management is now in its fourth year and has been completed by approximately 250 participants to date. Two sessions were held in Nairobi in April 2009 and another two will be conducted in Amman later in the year, in a more region-specific format. A fifth session will take place in the Geneva area. This course will help mid- and senior-level field managers to participate more effectively in Security and Area Security Management Teams, as well as improving their capacity to address security issues in their respective programmes. Invitations have been extended to personnel from other agencies, funds and programmes, as well as to UNDSS as part of UNHCR's commitment and support of the centralized UN Security Management System.

13.     The year 2008 saw the creation of a number of Regional FSA positions, in line with the recommendations of the 2004 Security Policy and Policy Implementation report. These posts were transferred from Headquarters to operations in the Field. Security Advisers in these positions are better placed to assist the Bureaux to review and analyse security issues more closely, thereby enabling a more effective operational and security-related resource management. This is in addition to supporting operations where FSAs are not present and enhancing existing national staff capacity.

14.     UNHCR was able to draw on the expertise of a Field Safety Adviser during 2008 to assess a number of offices that required surveying from a "blast mitigation" perspective. The "blast mitigation" requirement was a result of the bombing of the UN premises in Algiers (2007) and the investigative panels established by the United Nations, in addition to UNHCR's own internal review. This capacity was vital in order to implement the relevant measures now required in addition to MOSS, given the increased risk to staff from explosives. This again demonstrates that wherever possible, in-house expertise is being drawn upon, allowing UNHCR to integrate mitigatory measures while realizing the primary objective of programme delivery.

15.     Between October 2008 and February 2009, UNHCR participated in the Operational Working Group created by the High-Level Committee on Management. This committee reviewed not only the Security Risk Management Process, but also the UN Security Phase system and a number of other tools to strengthen the security management system in line with recommendations that emerged from the Brahimi Report[4] and those of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security. UNHCR will continue to be a part of such processes at all levels.

16.     Timely and effective security support was provided to field operations by FSAs based in Headquarters.  The five FSAs who represent surge capacity of UNHCR's Field Safety Section (FSS) spent an average of 223 mission days each in the Field during 2008.

17.     FSAs contribute to improve the security situation for beneficiaries. This is a key component of operations and includes: interventions with the security forces; providing advice and support on physical security; risk assessments for UNHCR operations that also look at threats/ risk to beneficiaries; and the determination of appropriate action to mitigate the risk.  For example, FSAs worked with relevant government agencies and demining teams to ensure that return areas are safe and that any place with unexploded ordnance or mines are properly demarcated.  FSS continued to provide guidance and support to FSA's on these issues.  A review of practices and the development of guidelines are currently underway

## IV.  FOLLOW-UP

18.     UNHCR has scheduled a Hostage Incident Management Workshop for Security Advisers to enhance in-house capacity, and given the large number of resources required to effectively manage hostage incidents, particularly if a lengthy situation develops.  In addition to security specialists, other senior staff who play an important part in hostage incident management will also participate.

19.     Security training will continue to be included in the WEM training with two more courses scheduled for 2009. Three more sessions of the Security Management Learning Programme are planned for the rest of the year.

20.     As part of the Structural and Management Change process which includes the creation of a Global Learning Centre, the Senior Security Training Officer position will move to the Global Service Centre in Budapest.  It is envisaged that this will enhance the integrated approach to security, with various training components being included to meet the multiple demands.  There are also plans to have additional online induction training modules on security and an increased emphasis on training by FSAs at the local and regional levels.

21.     It is envisaged that situation analysis in many UNHCR operations will be enhanced with the strengthened regional Field Safety and Security capacity.  This will reinforce the UN Security Management Risk Management process in the areas where these resources are present and contribute to synchronizing mitigatory measures.

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[4]     Identical letters dated 2000/08/21 from the Secretary General to the President of the General Assembly to the President of the Security Council – *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, 21 August 2000 (A/55/305-s/2000/809)

22.     Following the workshop for Senior Regional FSAs on the management of critical incidents earlier this year, UNHCR will continue to be engaged in the Operational Working Groups on Security. It will also participate in pilot projects within the countries that have been selected by the Security management system. Gaps in UNHCR's security policies will be reviewed and addressed.

23.     A review is presently under way, through the Refugee Liaison Officer post, of efforts to improve the physical security of beneficiaries. This review is necessary to identify the added value of the systems introduced in various environments and to determine how best practices can be brought into other operations. In addition, UNHCR is working with an implementing partner to develop a practical tool for refugee security.

24.     FSS will continue to support operations through the rapid deployment of FSAs in emergencies. It will also analyse situations and work together with UNDSS to ensure that threats and risks are properly reviewed and that necessary resources can be made available if the risk level changes.

25.     UNHCR has been receiving an increasing number of requests to participate in Civil Military Exercises. It will continue to participate in selected exercises to enhance understanding by the military of the activities of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies as well as humanitarian imperatives in both refugee and IDP contexts. These exercises also look at how to work together, taking into consideration humanitarian space.

26.     The Office will continue to ensure MOSS compliance. The revised MOSS, which is more country-specific from the outset and linked to the Security Risk management process, is a welcome development. FSS will continue to offer guidance and support to operations on mitigatory measures, as well as to provide technical expertise to ensure that recommendations are adhered to.

27.     UNHCR welcomes a centralized approach to budgeting for security costs for UNDSS and would hope, subject to appropriate funding, that this will significantly reduce the additional commitments that are increasing consistently as a result of cost sharing at the country level. However, it must be recognized that, given the location of many of UNHCR's offices and operations, additional resources will be required to ensure sufficient risk mitigation measures. Surveys conducted in 2008-2009 have demonstrated the need to enhance preparedness at several locations, specifically in relation to the threat of explosions.

## V.  CONCLUSIONS

28.     UNHCR remains committed to ensuring that its global strategic objective of including security management in all parts of its operations is achieved. This will be pursued through a number of strategies and measures with particular focus on ensuring that:

- security is viewed as enabling, rather than constraining, operations;

- investment in security preparedness is understood as a means of enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of UNHCR programmes;

- while engaging in the DSS-led security management change process, UNHCR's operations are carried out under appropriate security arrangements;

- training at all stages of induction, deployment and case-specific situations is adequately addressed and resourced, so that managers are given the skills and tools to be proactive in assuring staff and beneficiary security, while balancing operational imperatives.

- UNHCR's capacity to respond to the challenges of both security risk management and critical incident management is strengthened.

- implementation of MOSS and security-related activities are planned, budgeted and monitored more effectively;

- appropriate mitigation measures are introduced, reviewed and modified in line with the revised MOSS and SRA process, taking into consideration changes in threat/risk levels, while balancing the need to implement programmes.  This may require additional funding and support;

- Partners continue to be involved in working towards a comprehensive approach that considers the needs of the beneficiaries as well as security implications in all aspects of planning.

29.    The Office will continue to keep the Standing Committee informed of any new developments with regard to efforts to strengthen safety and security for staff and beneficiaries.

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