

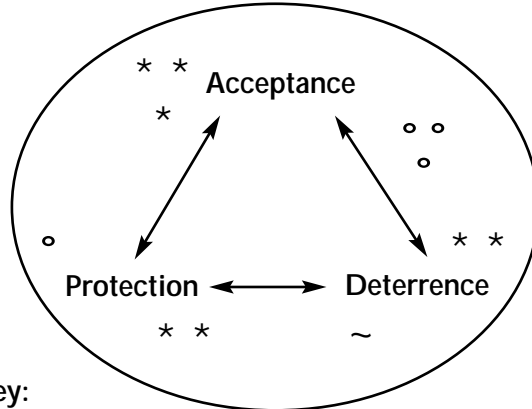
5 Security Strategies

5.1 Ideal-type Strategies

A review of agency security guidelines and manuals suggests that the most common response to perceived threats and risks is to adopt protective devices and procedures. Understandable as this is, and necessary as it may be, it also reflects a reactive and besieged mentality. It begs the question of why agencies have become so besieged. It also ignores or obscures the fact that threats may be triggered by how the aid agency positions itself in a conflictual environment, how it designs and implements its programme, or how, in any other way, it acts in a way that could be considered provocative.

This chapter discusses three ideal-type security strategies: acceptance, protection and deterrence.

Diagram 6: Security Strategies



- Key:**
- ~ Different
 - * types of
 - o threat

An acceptance strategy tries to reduce or remove threats by increasing the acceptance (the political and social 'consent') for your presence and your work in a particular context (politicians and the military call this 'winning hearts and minds'). A protection strategy uses protective devices and procedures to reduce the vulnerability of the agency, but it does not address the threat. In technical jargon this is called 'hardening the target'. A third approach is to deter a threat by counter-threat. This ranges from legal, economic or political sanctions to, most prominently, a counter-threat of defensive or offensive use of force.

The three approaches constitute a range of options from 'soft' to 'hard': seeking acceptance and consent, adopting protective procedures and using protective devices, and threatening with sanctions or counter-violence. In other words, acceptance is about making more friends, protection about sheltering at a distance, and deterrence about intimidating your enemies.

The different strategies have different resource and operational implications. An acceptance strategy may imply that resources are allocated not strictly according to need, but in a way which may facilitate the overall operation. Protective devices carry a direct financial cost while protective procedures (for example, curfews, two-car rule) can restrict operational capacity. A deterrence strategy can have large resource implications and can, in the short term, facilitate operations. However, in the medium-term it can profoundly impair operations.

In the aid world, different agencies generally favour different strategies. The preferred strategy of the International Red Cross and a number of NGOs is to seek acceptance; that of the UN and a number of other NGOs is to reduce vulnerability through protective measures; that of military peace-support operations is to adopt measures of deterrence.

Security problems arise when the preferred security strategies fail to match the threats in the environment. NGOs which provide aid are accustomed to feeling accepted. There are two dangers here:

1. Acceptance cannot be assumed; it has to be won and actively maintained.
2. Acceptance may not be an effective security strategy against all threats. For example, if you are facing 'opportunistic' robbers who are still part of a social community, and in that sense can be influenced or controlled by that community, then enhanced 'acceptance' by that community is likely to increase your security. But if you are facing hardened criminals who are organised into gangs to which they shift their primary loyalty, then a protection and even deterrence strategy might be required. Most aid agencies

operating in the northern Caucasus in the mid-1990s, for example, underestimated the degree of suspicion about 'hidden agendas' and therefore the need for special efforts to build acceptance. They also underestimated the threats from conflict entrepreneurs and organised crime gangs.

A deterrence strategy could equally turn out to create more problems than it solves. The style of the US troop landing on the beaches of Mogadishu in late 1992 revealed the security strategy to be one of deterrence. Attempts to cultivate the initial goodwill and acceptance of the Somali population were not systematically pursued and the relationship soon became antagonistic and many Somalis turned hostile to the peacekeepers.

This seems to suggest that a protection strategy is most desirable. But while it may be necessary, it is not sufficient. Its two main weaknesses are that it focuses on you as the potential target, while in no way addressing those who pose the threat. It also tends to lead to a bunker mentality – ie, dig yourself in and isolate yourself from your environment. This complicates the development of relationships with others, and probably reduces their quantity and quality.

There are many actors in violent environments. Some pose a threat, others become allies. In practice, therefore, you will need a combination of strategies: you may, for example, want to cultivate acceptance and good relationships with local populations and their leadership, but also adopt protective measures against crime. The point is that in proactive security management you make more conscious choices about the strategy or mix of strategies you pursue in the light of the range of threats you identify.

Which Security Strategy in North Niger?

An aid agency involved in child vaccination and food distribution has security concerns in north Niger. The area of the Tobu people is difficult to access and vehicles are often attacked and stolen at gunpoint. Pastoralists are difficult to reach with the vaccination programme.

Discussions conclude that two major security strategies would be possible:

1. The first would institute convoys under the protection of army troops. However, the difficulties of the terrain and the practical arrangements required make this a problematic option. Moreover, the aid agency would be perceived to be associated with the government army, which is resented by the Tobu.

Continued...

2. The second would be to seek and build up acceptance by the Tobu. This would require the identification of places and times when they are reachable, such as at their annual autumn festival, the setting up of radio programmes in the Tobu language on topics of interest to them, and the combination of an animal and child vaccination programme.

In practice the emphasis of one strategy over the other may shift in the light of evolving circumstances.

5.2 The Acceptance Strategy

Key matters to consider in the context of an acceptance strategy are: broad-based relationships, meetings and stated messages, implicit messages, and programme impacts and perceptions. Key principles are to establish and maintain contacts; to try to maintain balance in your relationships; to manage your image; to show respect and to make yourself respected.

5.2.1 Broad-based Relationships

Developing relationships

The proactive positioning of an agency involves developing broad-based, inclusive contacts with the multiple authorities and powerbrokers. This is where your situational analysis and mapping come into use. In highly fragmented environments where groups enter into shifting alliances this poses a considerable challenge. It is easy to overlook one or more power broker who may then retaliate violently.

In a conflict situation where the belligerents have seemingly cohesive structures the perception of humanitarian agencies and their operations is not necessarily transmitted through the ranks and local commanders may have considerable discretion with regard to their response to aid agencies. This requires you to have sufficient competent staff with the time to develop and maintain a network of contacts. They also need to be clear about the values, mandate and mission of your agency (Chapter 3).

In the face of problems, intimidation or threat, temporarily suspending your work and reducing your presence should not be the automatic response. Analyse what the causes might be. If it seems to be a lack of contacts or poor relationships you may decide to reinforce your presence and so strengthen your relation-building capacity. This will enhance your acceptance.

Formal agreements

You may have to, or choose to, formalise the relationships you build. You will have to do so with governmental authorities, and could choose to do so with certain armed opposition groups.

Formal agreements are useful in that they provide formal recognition and explicit reference. They can also be problematic when they are valid for only a limited period of time: in protracted situations negotiations often become more difficult over time.

If you keep the terms fairly general this leaves flexibility for your operations. However, general and vague terms can work against you as they leave the other party room for the denial of responsibility. With regard to security, spell out and agree on fairly detailed terms. Your agreements on security should also spell out the procedures to be followed if security problems do arise.

Written agreements do not have the same value in every social environment. For example, the word of honour of the right person might be more important. The obligation implied is likely to be more strictly observed, if it is widely known that someone has given his word.

Socialising

Socialising to develop a more relaxed and personal relationship is a standard practice in diplomacy: government officials are invited to private dinners or parties at the residence of the agency representative; you accept the hospitality of the tribal leader who slaughters a goat or sheep in your honour, or invite the elders to 'tea'.

Building a relationship requires more than rare, brief, formal meetings. A formal agreement may turn into a mere piece of paper if there is no other contact to maintain the quality of the relationship. At the same time, socialising should not make you lose the critical distance that you need to be able to be firm and perhaps even to go public when real problems arise, while at the same time being sensitive to the potential host-guest relationship.

Be careful who you are seen to be socialising with. In an environment of radical antagonisms and high suspicion, socialising (too much) with a particular party can contribute to the threats against you.

Interactional and negotiating styles

Pay attention to the different interactional and negotiating styles of different social subgroups. Armies have their own organisational culture and language; so too do career civil servants and bureaucrats. Aid workers with a military

background may therefore find it easier to negotiate with, for example, Russian officers in the Caucasus or Nigerian ECOMOG officers in West Africa. These same people, however, may find themselves very much out of place in a more tribal environment, for example, in Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa where an anthropological background could come in handy. People with a background in social work or trade unionism may in turn fit most easily into a Latin American environment with its strong tradition of community organisation and social mobilisation.

The above point is an argument in favour of involving competent national staff in important negotiations (Chapter 20), as they will understand the vernacular language, be able to read non-verbal messages, be familiar with the social codes of behaviour, and generally have a far deeper contextual knowledge than you have. Prepare important meetings together in advance: What do you know about your interlocutors? What positions and arguments do you expect them to use? What will be your position? What style and tactics will you adopt? Such a team approach to developing and maintaining relationships requires trust and respect between those involved (Chapter 18).

In many contexts it may be advisable that messages and decisions that are likely to displease your interlocutor come from an expatriate who is less susceptible to pressure, intimidation and possible retaliation than a national. Be clear in advance about the respective roles you will adopt in the negotiations.

5.2.2 Meetings and Stated Messages

Public statements

Critical public statements are seldom received with gratitude. It is important to consider:

- what the reasons are for going public rather than delivering the message more discreetly;
- whether to inform the recipient of the message in advance and/or deliver the message first before (also) going public;
- how to phrase your statement: what can you document/substantiate if challenged, what could be a less provocative way of phrasing it?
- if you can, control the final version that goes into the public domain: for example, the content of a written press release is easier to keep under control than a press conference that allows questioning, or a live interview;
- beware of 'leaked' statements: how much can you trust a statement 'off the record' to be kept confidential? (For some journalists nothing is 'off the record' if

it makes a good story.) How confidential will statements remain which are made in an open forum such as an interagency coordination meeting? There may be all sorts of reasons why a statement is leaked in a more or less distorted form.

Messages from meetings

Messages and images are conveyed not only in meetings but also through the type of meeting that takes place. Who calls the meeting, who is invited, where it takes place, what the seating arrangements are, are all well-known aspects of diplomacy; they also play a role in developing a certain type of relationship. Summoning local elders to your office, for example, conveys a different message from going to see them in their own environment. People may come to your office to make demands that you quickly know are unacceptable. But it may make tactical sense to spend more time with them than you need to convey your response, until the visitors conclude the meeting rather than you. You will have to balance the management of your time against the effects of appearing brusque and impolite.

Staff communication

Senior agency staff may handle the formal encounters with many groups and actors. But messages about your agency are not only communicated by senior staff and in formal meetings and encounters. It is the perhaps the more junior programme staff who are most likely to deal with local-level government officials, with fighters at roadblocks, with local counterparts and with representatives of the local population. Also drivers, logisticians and administrative staff interact with large numbers of outsiders. Make sure they have a clear view of the principles and role of the agency, and of its mission and position in that particular context, and that they are aware of the sensitivities about communications, messages and styles of interaction, and their impact on your overall image and relationships.

5.2.3 Implicit Messages

Implicit messages are conveyed through appearance, behaviour and male–female interactions, all of which may lead to misunderstandings that could negatively affect your image and your relationship.

Appearance

Appearance is important. Hair style, body decoration and dress code are not only a matter of fashion, but also carry social and political meanings. This includes earrings, tattoos, make-up and style of spectacles (the Khmer Rouge killed any Cambodian who wore spectacles because of the 'intellectual' class

position it revealed), an 'Islamic' beard, choice of clothing and how much it covers or reveals, etc. Khaki-coloured trousers and jackets with many side-pockets may communicate a 'safari image' that is associated with the wealthy but ignorant tourist. T-shirts with the different aid agency logos can give the impression of a group of competitive outside interveners. Adopting local dress that may belong to one group in a divided and polarised context may be perceived as signalling an alliance.

Also consider the image that is projected by the use of mobile phones and VHF radios, the new 4-wheel drive vehicles with air-conditioning and tall radio antennae, uniformed guards at the compound gates, large desks of finished hardwood with two telephones and a secretary in attendance. Well organised, well protected, but well accepted?

Behaviour

It will be important to consider the following:

- While inappropriate behaviour by itself does not necessarily translate into a threat, it could aggravate existing suspicions and tensions and provide fertile ground for those whose objective is to stir up animosity towards you. A good briefing on, and monitoring of, interactional styles can help avoid many problems (Chapter 18).
- The kind of behaviour that is considered appropriate or inappropriate in your particular social/cultural environment, as well as your status, gender and age. For example, in certain social environments (certain categories of) men are expected to show highly assertive behaviour. Other social environments emphasise the need for composure and self-control.
- Many social environments have implicit norms about the consumption of stimulants such as alcohol. Even when this is not frowned upon, its acceptance tends to be limited to particular places, times and social occasions. The acceptance of alcohol consumption should not be confused with the acceptance of drunkenness, especially in public. Consuming alcohol with others can be an important ritual, but you will be expected to be able to 'hold your drink' and the risk of saying or doing something stupid increases as you lose your self-control.
- The public expression of anger or irritation is always resented and can be provocative. Firmness in saying 'no' will generally do you no harm when it is combined with a correct and polite attitude. But arrogance, real or perceived, tends to create resentment. A foreigner will have to pay extra attention, but this applies equally to national staff.

Case Study: Resentment Aggravated by Staff Behaviour

In 1996 the national staff of an agency working with refugees and the host population became the object of verbal and written death threats, and eventually were being shot at. These threats and violence were partly rooted in a broader context of tension between the host population and the refugees. Delays and uncertainties about services, in particular the delivery of food aid, also caused resentment, though the agency had undeniably brought many tangible benefits in difficult circumstances. Yet it was the behaviour of the national staff that triggered the violence. Speeding agency vehicles caused a significant increase in road accidents involving local people. Staff were criticised for being arrogant, abusive and unwilling to listen. Several of the well-paid staff members had also become involved in informal relationships with refugee and local women, sometimes leading to pregnancies outside marriage.

Female behaviour and male-female interactions

Many patriarchal societies articulate their moral and communal integrity in terms of the 'purity' of women, for which dress and behavioural codes provide a strong indicator. In times of conflict, when group identities are often redrawn or reaffirmed, such codes may apply even more strongly. Apart from signalling an urban origin in rural areas, the wearing of shorts, short skirts, and open-necked blouses and sleeveless shirts can be seen as socially provocative and religiously offensive. At one end of the spectrum the response may be one of disapproval. At the other end there may be sexual harassment or worse. In order to gain respect for their personal qualities as professionals or as women, female staff should be mindful of these issues rather than insisting on personal freedoms in ways that could be perceived as disrespectful to local codes and sensitivities. But men, too, need to consider whether the way they dress evokes respect or is perceived as disrespectful.

It is also important to be sensitive to, and careful about, the social norms regulating the behaviour between women and men outside the immediate family, as well as the different notions of 'public' and 'private'. Many social environments have more restrictive codes about the public display of 'intimate' behaviour such as holding hands, embracing and kissing.

5.2.4 The Messages and Politics of Staff Composition

The composition of your national staff in particular is important from a security point of view for two reasons:

1. It influences how you are perceived and therefore how people will relate to you.
2. It influences the breadth of the informal contacts and information channels you can establish and maintain.

Real or perceived divisions among staff

In an ethnically divided environment, for example in Bosnia, Kosovo, Liberia, Chechnya, Guatemala, etc, make sure that all major ethnic groups or clans are represented on your staff.

Another common 'divide' is that between people from urban and rural backgrounds. This can cause problems in places where the urban and rural environments constitute very different social worlds and where city-dwellers can be as much 'outsiders' as foreigners. For instance, in Albania a number of agencies went to the more traditional north with drivers and translators recruited from Tirana and were surprised to have their cars stolen.

In other places such as Karachi in Pakistan, tensions can exist between an older indigenous population and more recent 'immigrants'. Another possible divide can be that of political affiliation. You don't want, unknowingly, to end up with most of your staff being members of the same political party.

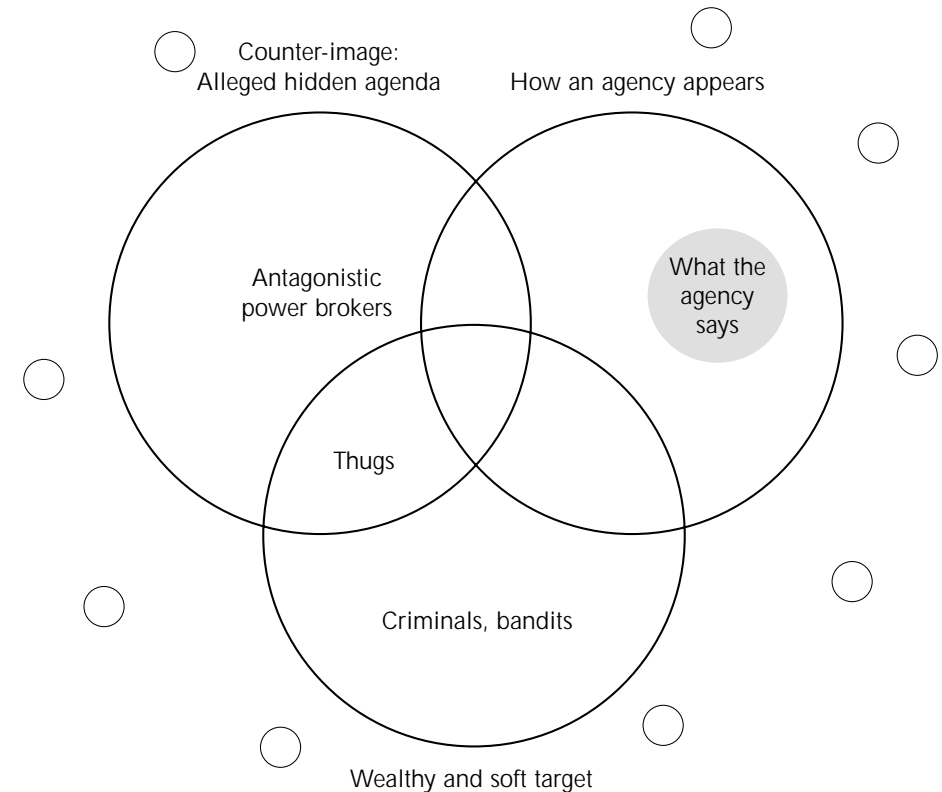
Ideally you want to strive perhaps not for 'proportional representation' but for a 'defendable mix' of members of various groups in a fragmented social environment. Where this is not possible – because one ethnic group, clan or political party etc. is dominant – you may want to strive for a 'balanced presence' among the territories of different 'segregated' groups and, if possible, have mixed staff in the central field office in the capital city.

A strategy of 'defendable mix' for the sake of acceptance (for programmatic and security reasons) may override a policy of recruitment on the basis of skill and equal opportunity only. In other words, you may deliberately seek out, or give preference to, people from a certain category, even if they are not the best qualified. Beware of a mix of staff belonging to different groups between which there are tensions or even open conflict which could potentially import 'conflict' into the organisation. It will be a challenge to develop an in-depth understanding of the conflict, clarify the position of your agency in that context, and exercise your 'conflict-mediating' skills vis-à-vis your own staff!

5.2.5 Programming

Chapter 4 discussed a number of ways in which how you and other agencies identify, design and implement your programmes can enhance or lead to the loss of acceptance.

Diagram 7: Different Images and Perceptions



How an agency is perceived in general does not only depend on what it says about itself and its intentions and role. In the eyes of criminals and bandits, it may well be perceived as a wealthy and soft target. Powerbrokers who are antagonistic to one or more humanitarian agencies may also spread a different image of it, for example, as an actor with a hidden agenda. In doing so they may give a 'spin' to certain actions, sayings or appearances of the aid agency or its staff as 'evidence' for the perception that they suggest.

5.3 The Protection Strategy

There are many different facets to a protection strategy. These are often used in combination.

Reduce exposure

This includes reducing exposure for personnel, imposing no-go zones and no-go times (curfew), withdrawing female staff from areas with a high risk of rape, reducing staff numbers (to 'essential staff' only) or withdrawing/evacuating all staff members and suspending or closing the programme. With regard to assets, it may mean limiting the amount of cash (Chapter 11) and other valuables/assets that can constitute an attraction for robbers.

Reduce or increase visibility

In situations where aid agencies enjoy a high degree of acceptance the prominent display of the agency emblem or logo on staff shirts, compound entrances, vehicles and the rooftops of field offices can provide protection. In other situations, however, it may signal to unscrupulous criminals, politically motivated groups or resentful populations where the 'soft and wealthy target' – ie, the aid agency – is. A protective tactic may be to blend into the background by reducing your identification marks. For individuals living in a tense or risky environment, this translates into keeping a low profile with regard to your residence, means of transport, personal appearance and behaviour. During the NATO air campaign against Serbia in the spring of 1999, for example, the Macedonian population was divided. Its Albanian minority was generally in favour of NATO action; its Slav majority sympathised with the Serbs. An aid agency operating there used removable logos on its vehicles: in the Albanian-inhabited areas they were put on; elsewhere they were removed.

Strength in numbers

Driving in convoy (Chapter 8), the instruction that staff should never go out alone, moving agency compounds closer together (Chapter 9) and neighbourhood watch schemes are all attempts to reduce vulnerability by grouping together.

Protective devices

These include helmets and flakjackets for individuals; blast walls, bomb shelters and sniper walls near battlefields (Chapter 7); and compound protection measures such as high walls with barbed wire, barred windows, a burglar alarm and/or closed circuit television, increased lighting, and the use of unarmed guards and/or watchdogs (Chapter 9). Radios are often seen as protective

devices because they allow you to maintain communications (Chapter 17). Note, however, that radios, just like 4-wheel drive vehicles, can actually increase the risk in certain contexts, because they mark you out as 'wealthy', or because armed groups want to capture the radios for their own use, etc.

Protective procedures

Announcing your movements to the warring parties in advance and perhaps seeking their explicit consent before you set out can be a protective procedure (Chapter 7). So too the practice of controlling who goes in and out of the compound, or searching visitors and cars (Chapter 9).

Protection money

Aid agencies are not known to pay cash directly as 'protection' money. However, accepting the levying of 'tax' in kind by all sorts of illegitimate authorities can be considered a variation on the theme. This includes the payment of bribes (in cash or more often in kind, for example, a number of food bags). This is a form of buying acceptance and is therefore not genuine acceptance. At the outset it might temporarily reduce your vulnerability, but beware of getting into an inflationary spiral where the 'cost of protection' may increase beyond what you deem acceptable.

Protect your life

Staff should be instructed not to resist armed attackers, in particular. While surrounding personal and agency valuables does not reduce the risk of being robbed at gunpoint, it does reduce the risk of a gun being turned on the victim. Similarly, not resisting a sexual assault may be the response if the victim becomes convinced that resistance could lead to greater harm or loss of life (Chapter 12).

5.4 The Deterrence Strategy

5.4.1 Legal, Political and Economic Sanctions

Field-level security management and frontline diplomacy may need to be backed up by additional pressure from the threat of sanctions. It is useful for your staff to know what legal protection they enjoy as aid workers, and under what conditions (Annex 2). Unfortunately, in most circumstances, referring to and threatening with legal, political or economic sanctions will not be a very effective deterrent.

- There may be no effective state security forces or they may be in collusion with criminals and/or insurgent forces, or the 'security forces' can themselves be a source of insecurity.
- Peace accords sometimes require the granting of an amnesty to those who have committed abuses and atrocities in order to persuade all parties to sign.
- International criminal tribunals are not for the time being much of a deterrent, as few indicted persons are ever apprehended.
- International sanctions are not very effective against authoritarian regimes, or against non-state actors without a 'state-project' or with 'alternative' sources of supply.

5.4.2 Suspension of Operations and/or Withdrawal

In the face of certain threats, and often after security incidents, agencies have at times 'threatened' the suspension of their aid programmes. The continuation or resumption of the programme is then made conditional upon the resolution of the problem and pledges from those targeted by the measure of greater efforts to maintain the security of the agency. Anecdotal evidence and more rigorous reviews of the effectiveness of aid conditionality suggest that in many cases the tactic does not work very well, and that after a while the aid agency resumes its programme although there has been no noticeable improvement in the contextual conditions of work. The threat may have signalled your disapproval, but its ineffectiveness also highlights your vulnerability, while resuming the programme without improvements in working conditions, leads to a certain loss of credibility. Next time your threatened suspension will not be taken so seriously. It is important therefore to consider the conditions and the chances of success in resorting to suspension.

The following are suggested circumstances under which the chances of effectiveness are increased:

- There is a sufficiently influential section of the population and/or local leadership that, for reasons of self-interest or more general acceptance, can be mobilised on your behalf.
- The local community or local authorities have influence over the offenders, or are prepared to act potentially with force to catch them.
- The suspension or withdrawal is not perceived as primarily punishing innocent civilians who have no involvement in the causes of insecurity and are not in a position to improve your security.

- There is a real preparedness to suspend operations and to maintain the suspension until the situation is satisfactorily resolved, and not to annul the decision too quickly because of internal agency pressures to resume activities.
- Unless the incident is very serious, a selective suspension and/or gradual reintroduction of services gives you more room for tactical manoeuvre. A total suspension tends to create a difficult all-or-nothing situation.
- Other agencies do not undercut your tactic of suspension by stepping in to fill the gap. You should therefore first build-up a common front.

Suspension as a tactic seems to work best when there is a high level of acceptance, and when it is adopted in a way that does not erode that acceptance. Where the offenders are not concerned about your aid programme or the impact of its suspension on the largely powerless population, they are unlikely to respond to your threat. You can still decide to suspend the programme to signal your protest at the insecure conditions in which you are working, but not with the intention or hope of exercising effective pressure.

5.4.3 Armed Protection

The strongest form of deterrence is the use of armed protection. Even when a force is small, lightly armed and under instructions to use its weapons only in self-defence, the potential use of fire power in the face of threat introduces a qualitative difference in your security strategy. It also profoundly affects the image and perception of aid agencies in general.

Case Study: Strategic Choices in Incident Resolution

Within the space of six months, two aid agency vehicles are stolen at gunpoint in a refugee camp close to the border. The car-jackers disappear across the border.

Agency 'Nice' runs a large supplementary feeding programme in the camp, and decides to try and pursue an acceptance strategy. The manager and some selected national agency staff have a low-profile meeting with camp 'elders', some of whom belong to the same social group as the bandits. The agency argues that it does not want to punish the vulnerable women and children in the camp, but now faces a practical problem. It cannot mobilise another vehicle, and has no means of taking the food and staff from the central store in the camp back and forth to the various outlying feeding centres. It asks the elders to try to get back the vehicle, and in the meantime to share in the responsibility for the well-being of their family and clan members. It asks the elders to mobilise a private vehicle, for which the agency will pay only for the fuel, until such time as the stolen one is returned. They do so.

Agency 'Tough', however, which provides the general ration to the camp population, pursues a deterrence strategy. It calls the camp elders to a high-profile public meeting where they are seated on school benches and accused by the agency representative of having harboured the bandits without preventing the car jacking taking place. The agency immediately plays its trump card: it will suspend general food distributions until the stolen vehicle is returned. It ignores the elders' protests that innocent people cannot be made to suffer for the misconduct of a few individuals.

Agency 'Nice' had its vehicle returned by the local people; agency 'Tough' did not and after a while, predictably, had to abandon its suspension of the general ration without having gained anything.

6 Armed Protection

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6 Armed Protection

6.1 The Basic Question

Armed protection and humanitarian action remain uneasy bedfellows. Although in reality many agencies at one time or another have used some form of armed protection, the discussion about it quickly turns emotive. This chapter is an attempt to provide a more systematic framework for considering the matter, and to stimulate depth and clarity of reasoning in coming to an informed decision. It is not intended to be an argument for the use of armed protection. At every step in the line of reasoning it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that armed protection is not the option.

Before proceeding, however, consider that if you start actually thinking about armed protection you may have reached the threshold of acceptable risk and should withdraw or stay out. If you consider that this threshold has not yet been reached, or that the use of armed protection could perhaps reduce the risk to a more acceptable level, then three major areas come into play in thinking through the decision: principles, context and management.

6.2 Questions of Principle

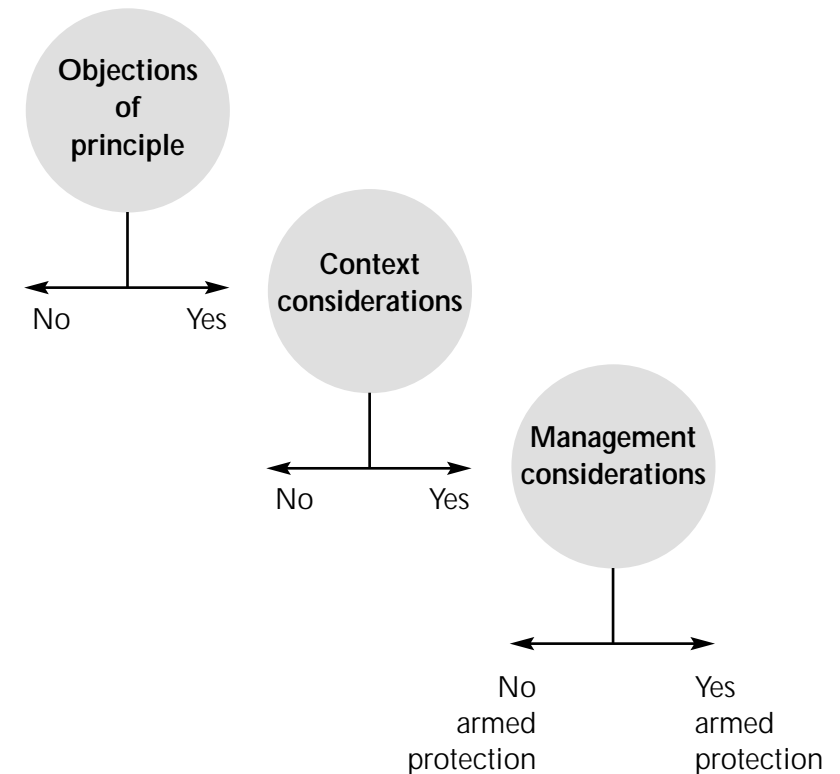
The first stage in thinking this through concerns principle:

- Do you believe that the use of force can be justified under certain conditions or not?
- Do you believe that the use of force is compatible or not with humanitarian action?
- Do you believe that using armed protection would contribute to the local/global arms race?
- Do you believe that it can be justified to pay for armed protection?

6.2.1 Conditional Use of Force

Clarify your attitude, in principle, to the use of force and distinguish between absolute and conditional pacifism and non-violence. (Absolute non-violence is the rejection of force under any circumstances. Conditional non-violence can accept the limited and defensive use of force in the face of clear aggression or violent threat.)

Diagram 8: Thinking Through the Decision to get Armed Protection



6.2.2 Force Compatible with Humanitarian Action

Is armed protection against the basic principles of what constitutes 'humanitarian action'? Or is it only a response to the conditions in which humanitarian action has to take place, and one that, when carefully and proportionately used, does not undermine its basic principles?

Arguments against the use of force

These tend to be inspired by ethical and/or long-term operational considerations. The ethical argument holds that humanitarian action is never compatible with the use of force. The long-term operational consideration is

that, whereas in a specific context armed protection might be justifiable, it erodes the overall image of humanitarian action worldwide and may therefore lead to increased insecurity elsewhere or in the future. According to this line of reasoning, resorting too quickly or too often to armed protection undermines global efforts to restore respect for international humanitarian law and with it the immunity of aid workers.

Arguments in favour of the use of force

These might hold that force can be acceptable as a last option, and when people's lives and survival would be at risk if humanitarian and other assistance were not 'forced through' under armed protection. There is no dispute about the fact that 'moral authority' – a measure of acceptance – is the best way to obtain compliance. But there may be violent people who cannot be made to respect other people's rights and integrity by moral arguments only. Hence democratic and peaceful countries maintain a police force that, if necessary, can be used to apprehend dangerous criminals, serial rapists, armed robbers or violent hooligans.

Contradictory positions

Is the use of armed protection by an aid agency compatible with a policy of forbidding arms in agency vehicles and compounds? This requires a consideration of international humanitarian law (IHL) and the origins of the policy forbidding weapons in aid agency premises/vehicles. Strictly speaking, in terms of IHL, the purpose of humanitarian action is to insert 'humanity' into a situation of violent conflict, but not per se to halt that violence. IHL does not condemn the use of arms and is not an anti-war declaration. It tries to introduce restraint among combatants and measures of protection for civilians and non-combatants, and to create 'spaces' in the midst of the fighting where humanity can prevail and no fighting should take place. Clearly, then, the 'bearers' of that message of humanity should not themselves carry weapons or allow weapons in their 'space'.

But consider the limitations of IHL, which essentially applies to organised warfare between states and, by extension, to organised non-state armed groups. Its authority derives simply from an agreement among states, and possibly non-state groups, to abide by it. Humanitarian action can be allowed by armed groups, if they consent to it. The problem is: what happens if armed groups do not consent to and respect (from a security point of view) the presence and activities of humanitarian actors, and cannot be persuaded to do so, while endangered populations are in pressing need of protection and assistance? There is also another possibility: that there is no organised armed group but only criminals or, for example, demobilised soldiers who are no longer under a command structure and who turn to banditry. The question of obtaining consent from them does not even apply.

Consent

The notion of 'official consent', like the concept of 'sovereignty', has come under debate in recent years. Like the question of in whom sovereignty is ultimately vested, in the government or in the people of a nation, so too the question can be asked: whose consent counts most, that of the power brokers or of ordinary civilians? Is consent the key criterion, or compliance with international standards and norms? It is useful here to look briefly at 'neutrality' in terms of military peace-support operations. In such operations UN troops are required to be neutral. Neutrality implies avoiding taking sides and using excessive force. It does not, however, mean passivity. Neutrality can be principled. Principled neutrality requires responding to what a violent group is doing – not because of which faction or side they belong to but because their acts are a violation of basic human rights and/or the standards of international law. It does not mean abstaining from the use of force under all circumstances, but using the minimum force necessary to obtain compliance with agreed norms, rules and laws.

Compliance

Those accepting that force can be used, under certain conditions, for humanitarian purposes, might point out that this may not meet with the consent of the party to which it is applied, but, importantly, may well have the consent and acceptance of the population at large. Endangered and abused populations have sometimes lost confidence in the international community, because it refrained from using force where it mattered. Somalis came to wonder what the purpose of 'Operation Restore Hope' was if it was not going to disarm the predatory militias. There is still deep resentment in Rwanda because UNAMIR troops withdrew when the genocide started. And in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia, people have been exasperated that UNPROFOR at times did very little to protect them effectively from shelling, mass expulsion and massacre. The principled, targeted, measured and accountable use of force to obtain compliance with basic international standards and norms which exist for the public good, may enhance acceptance among the population at large.

Public security

Note that in this reflection we have moved from the consideration of armed protection for the private security of aid agencies and peacekeepers, to that of armed protection for the public security of endangered people. A major consideration would be who benefits from the armed protection: is it only the aid agency and its staff, or can the protection provide wider public benefit and enhance public security? Are you contributing to the 'privatisation' of security, whereby those who are able to pay can buy security while others have to live in fear, or are you contributing to increased wider, public security?

6.2.3 Armed Protection and the Local/Global Arms Race

From a radical, anti-arms point of view, you will refuse armed protection because its use, as a matter of principle, contributes to the ongoing production and distribution of arms. Using armed protection, practically and morally, sends 'the wrong message'.

A more conditional perspective might focus not so much on the production of arms per se but on their uncontrolled proliferation – ie, the loss of a monopoly of violence by the authorities responsible for security and law and order. Armed protection which is not provided by the authorities would stimulate that trend.

Ultimately you may have to weight the two together. You can do this from a principled or contextual point of view: what matters most takes priority: controlling arms proliferation or securing urgently needed humanitarian assistance (and protection for civilians)?

6.2.4 Paying for Armed Protection

Following experience with the protection rackets of some Somali militia guards, some aid workers have argued that aid agencies should never pay for armed protection. There are ethical and practical arguments that may be invoked when making this decision.

Weighing the value of life

On the moral level one could argue that the value of the resources lost or stolen cannot be weighed against the value of a life lost in an armed confrontation, be it the life of a guard, an assailant or a bystander. Yet the situation may be one in which not assets but people themselves are targeted. The investment in armed protection is therefore meant to save lives. One could also argue that in situations of acute need the cost of a life cannot be weighed against the cost, in terms of suffering and possible death among endangered populations, of not getting urgently needed relief goods through.

The use of charitable donations

Another moral, and perhaps legal, question is whether paying for armed protection is a legitimate use of donations for charitable purposes. Is it, as a matter of principle, an abuse of such donations, or is it warranted as an inevitable cost to present the theft of the resources bought with the donations? From the latter point of view you could weigh the cost of armed protection against the value of the assets that might be looted, and against that of the insurance cover for assets and people in high-risk areas.

The economic arguments

From a pragmatic and economic perspective one could argue that some law and order service is (still) a necessary part of the functioning even of democratic and peaceful societies; in functioning democracies part of one's tax contributions finance the police, the national guard and the armed forces. Paying directly for armed protection only makes more transparent a reality that is otherwise less visible.

Whose responsibility

In some countries the government security force, police or armed forces are ineffective for lack of resources. As a result there have been instances in which aid agencies have supported the state materially, for example, with vehicles, to enable it to perform with some effectiveness. While this is ultimately the responsibility of the national government, a large proportion of international relief and rehabilitation assistance already provides services that government would normally be expected to provide. If aid pays part of the bill for health and education, for example, can it also pay part of the bill for security?

Case Study: One Possible Policy

Under the policy of one agency, armed protection can be considered when:

- large numbers of lives are at risk;
- the threat is banditry, not political;
- the provider is acceptable;
- the deterrent can be effective.

6.3 Questions of Context

You have decided that you have not yet passed the threshold of acceptable risk and you want to continue operations. You have also decided that armed protection is not excluded as a matter of principle. Now you need to consider other questions:

- What are the threats and where do they come from?
- Is armed protection the only possible and the best answer?
- Does armed protection reduce or increase the risk?
- Who benefits from the armed protection?
- Who provides the armed protection?

6.3.1 The Nature and Origin of the Threats

What/who is armed protection supposed to protect you from? Where do the threats come from and why? The question of armed protection often arises when there is a risk of targeted assassination of aid personnel, of kidnapping, of armed robbery, and/or of ambush and robbery or destruction of aid convoys. Your deeper analysis (Chapters 3 and 4) will have given you some idea about the 'who' and perhaps even the 'why'.

6.3.2 Is Armed Protection the Only Possible and Best Answer?

Threats or incidents may occur for 'political reasons', for example, because the agency is not perceived as neutral in its operations. Armed protection may increase that perception. An approach might be to aim for a more balanced 'neutral' political positioning, increased dissemination about who you are and how you operate, and more active consent-seeking and acceptance-building.

You may not find this desirable: If you are driven by a solidarity agenda you will not wish to establish relationships with an oppressive government, for example (just as it is conceivable that on moral/political grounds you do not want to have relationships with a violent rebel group).

Or you may find it impossible: Attacks on aid workers may be part of a broader strategy of intimidation, terror and oppression, and those pursuing such a strategy may be deaf to your arguments. Similarly, threats can come from criminals, bandits and militias with whom it is difficult to cultivate 'acceptance'.

There may be alternative strategies. If new 4-wheel drive vehicles are the attraction, use second-hand 2-wheel drive ones – as long as they are in excellent operating condition. If international agency convoys and warehouses are a target because they are outside the 'social system', you could use, for example, local traders and merchants who are more protected because they are 'within the system'. If internationals are the only target of kidnapping, national staff could run the programme.

6.3.3 Does Armed Protection Reduce or Increase the Risk?

Even where armed protection seems justified, the question is: will it provide a reasonable deterrent or will it increase the risk? For example, if burglars suspect that a resident has a firearm, they may turn violent if surprised in the act. If road

bandits see a lightly armed convoy they may shoot before they loot. If armed protection is provided by government forces, you may turn yourself into a legitimate target in the eyes of the armed opposition.

Men and women may have different perceptions about this. Female staff may feel an added risk from armed men around them, who might become a threat.

Another important point is that reduced risk for you may mean increased risk for other people. For example, if some agencies use armed protection and others do not, this may increase the risk for the latter who, by comparison, become the more vulnerable target.

Finally, while armed protection may be the decision of the individual agency, it has implications for all agencies. Indeed, a sound operating premise is that people do not differentiate between different aid agencies not even between NGOs and the UN. One agency with armed protection will influence the image and perception of all humanitarian agencies, and therefore potentially affect everybody's acceptance and relationships.

6.3.4 Who Benefits from Armed Protection?

Typically in dangerous environments we tend to think about measures that will enhance our own security. It seems worthwhile, however, to consider whether and how security could be improved more generally. It might be possible to deploy armed protection in ways that enhance the general security instead of only that of the aid agency. For example, if you deploy armed guards in a refugee camp, can you do it in a way that protects not only your staff but also the refugee women who are at risk of sexual assault when they collect water and firewood? Can you develop a system whereby armed guards of several individual agencies patrol the neighbourhood and therefore increase the security of all? Your guards will themselves prefer clear and limited responsibilities and may not immediately warm to this type of approach, but there will be benefits to be had from it.

6.3.5 Who Provides the Armed Protection?

The decision to use armed protection must not be taken until you have considered a number of critical issues. You can draw up a list of potential providers and write a commentary for each, with their advantages and disadvantages in the light of your criteria. Different sources of armed protection

include the national army, the national police, an armed resistance group, UN military peacekeepers and UN police, local militia men, private security companies and armed guards on the agency's payroll. Questions to consider are:

- What is the 'political' position of a provider of armed protection in a given conflict – in other words, will you be seen as 'taking sides' if you associate yourself with a certain provider of armed protection?
- What is the public image and reputation of a provider of armed protection? If, for example, the national army or police is broadly perceived as an instrument of repression and exploitation, or if an armed faction has a reputation for brutality against civilians, using their 'protection' may damage your public image.
- How important for the provider of the armed protection is the extension of that protection to an aid agency compared with its other objectives? The provider may have another agenda that in critical moments may override concern for your security.
- What is the 'integrity' of the potential provider? If the police force harbours known war criminals you may not want it to provide you with protection. If a private security company can provide you with protection but also provides or manages the armed guard of government officials and/or transnational business interests who profit from the instability and are involved in illicit resource extraction, again you may not want to associate with them (Annex 5).
- How professional is the provider? Are the guards well trained, provided with functioning equipment, well instructed, supervised and disciplined?
- How much management control do you need, and do you want, over the provider? National security forces, rebel groups and UN police and peacekeepers, for example, will have their own chain of command where decisions are made. Hired militia, private security companies or guards on the agency payroll could come more under your command. Having more direct authority over the providers of armed protection brings them more under your control but also makes you directly accountable for their behaviour and actions. The advantages and disadvantages will have to be weighed in context.

It is conceivable that you will find yourself not opposed in principle to the use of force and that you judge armed protection to be an inevitable measure in your particular situation. Yet because none of the potential providers is acceptable and effective you may decide not to use armed protection. You must then run the risk, or withdraw.

6.4 Managing Armed Protection

As suggested above, when you hire armed protection you have more management control than when you request the assistance of external security forces. Nevertheless, even in the latter case a number of management questions have to be considered. It is advisable to discuss and negotiate them as clearly as possible with 'external' security forces, and to spell them out on paper in case of later disputes.

Overall the key questions to consider are:

- Do you have the in-house policies, procedures and management competence necessary for handling this relationship?
- Do you know the necessary contractual stipulations?
- Who maintains command and control, and who has authority and responsibility for what?

Internal management questions might then include:

- Who in the aid agency makes the decision/approves the use of armed protection?
- What knowledge and experience will the managers need to deal with it?
- How do you draw up tenders and assess the bids from local private security companies, if that is your choice?
- How can you make inquiries about the professionalism and integrity of a potential service provider?
- How do you check on the criteria for a selection of guards in terms of training, experience with handling weapons, etc?
- Who in the country office has the daily responsibility for the management of the guards, and does that person have the necessary competence and confidence?

6.4.1 Contractual Stipulations

There are a variety of stipulations that you will need to elaborate in an agreement or contract. These include:

- Guard selection criteria such as age, health, literacy, no use of alcohol or drugs, no other employment (at least to the extent that sleep is adequate).
- Essential requirements of supervisors and minimum standards in supervision.

- Minimum standards for recruitment and further in-service training: You may wish to stress certain basic training items such as local law and the power of arrest, fire and explosives, log-keeping, office evacuation, vehicle and body search procedures, package and mail search, first aid, etc.
- Ending of an agreement or contract: The need for armed protection is a dynamic variable and you may wish to end a contract quite suddenly for a variety of reasons. Make sure to spell out clear criteria and procedures for the early ending of the contract or agreement. Shorter-term, renewable contracts give you more flexibility but may also expose you to inflating price demands.
- Liability in case of an exchange of fire leading to injury or death: There are legal 'rules' governing liability and compensation, though in some situations it will be customary law that applies. Who is responsible for the injury or death of a guard, assailant, or bystander in an exchange of fire? Can your liability be restricted to actions that fall strictly within the agreed terms, or only when carried out following orders?
- Remuneration: In terms of salary scales or the payment of incentives you may have to find a balance between your wish to avoid stimulating a lucrative market in privatised security with the need to maintain motivation and commitment and, perhaps, loyalty to your agency. Guards often work long and unsociable hours and do a potentially dangerous job. Too low a salary may lead to low standards of performance.

6.4.2 Command and Control

A crucial question is who is in charge of what? To whom are the guards answerable; who has the authority of command; who is in charge of their discipline? Where external security forces provide armed protection, what is the relative authority of their commander versus that of the agency manager? Who, for example, determines the rules of engagement and who ensures that the guards have fully understood them? Rules of engagement concern the circumstances under which the guards can use force, in particular, their weapons and the proportionality of the force used.

Another important point is to agree procedures and approaches. It is advisable to determine or to discuss and agree on procedures for a number of possible scenarios, for example, what to do when a visitor refuses to be body-searched or insists on bringing in his own armed guards, or how far to go in the pursuit of fleeing robbers or attackers. Also, what disciplinary procedures apply for what sort of offence or non-performance of duty, and how you deal with the situation where you feel that a guard under external command needs to be subjected to disciplinary procedure.

Take note that in a multinational peacekeeping force, for example, different national armies tend to come with different traditions and cultures, including with regard to command and control, rules of engagement, and what is considered 'appropriate' or 'excessive' use of force. Detailed in-depth consultation with field-level commanders may be required to ensure a common understanding between you and the provider of your armed protection. Similarly, the national army may be deploying changing contingents of troops to provide you with protection. Different commanders will have different understandings and interpretations. This is why you need a detailed written agreement with a senior commander. Monitor to make sure replacements are fully briefed.

6.4.3 Weaponry and Other Equipment

Agreement will also have to be reached about:

- The type of weaponry the guards will use (eg, pistols, single shotguns, or machine guns). Who is responsible for providing the ammunition and for checking that the weapons are well maintained?
- Who is responsible for the provision of additional equipment such as rainproof clothing, flashlights, good boots, etc?
- Armed guards do not normally come with vehicles. Decisions will have to be made about if and when they can use agency vehicles. For example, can a local army contingent guarding the refugee camp use your agency's vehicle to pursue robbers of another agency's vehicle in the camp? In some instances agencies, after removing their logos, have made vehicles available to the army to escort aid convoys through bandit-infested areas. Alternatively, vehicles may be rented for the armed guards but the risk that the vehicles are damaged in crossfire needs to be anticipated. Who will be responsible for the damage?

It is conceivable that you will find that armed protection is necessary, and that the potential provider is acceptable, but that no satisfactory agreement can be reached about aspects of command and control. You may then decide to do without armed protection, and run the risk or suspend your operations.

Case Study: An Offer of Armed Protection

An agency was operating in a republic in the northern Caucasus at a time of increasing risk of kidnapping. The local authorities had been urging it for some time to take armed guards, which the agency did not want to do. One day, five government guards simply showed up. The implicit message was that the agency had to accept them or leave. The authorities wanted the agency to provide the guards with uniforms and pay them, to which the agency could not agree. It felt uncomfortable as it had no reference for the guards. A relative of their landlord who had good contacts with the local authorities arranged for the guards deployed to be men whom he knew. The government guards stayed outside the compound, while the agency had its own unarmed guards inside the compound. However, it never felt happy with the arrangement and eventually left.

PART IV

THREAT MANAGEMENT

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9 Site Protection

10 Crowds, Mobs and Looting

11 Cash Security

12 Sexual Aggression

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7 Battlefield Survival

This chapter considers the threats of bombing and shelling, crossfire and sniping, and landmines. There are other battle-related threats not considered here, such as relief planes being shot down or sea-mines. Two particularly useful pocket-sized publications for wider staff use which deal with these and other issues are D Gowdey (1997) *Landmine Safety Handbook*, published by CARE, and D L Roberts (1999) *Staying Alive: Safety and Security Guidelines for Humanitarian Volunteers in Conflict Areas*, published by the ICRC.

7.1 Core Questions and Core Advice

Key issues to consider and questions to ask in the face of active battlefield dangers concern:

- **The threshold of acceptable risk:** Should your agency be or remain there at all? Is the risk of shelling and bombing, crossfire and sniper fire still within your threshold of acceptable risk? Are there significant non-combatant assistance and protection needs that warrant the agency's presence?
- **The risk-benefit equation:** Are the conditions such that you can still effectively do something for the non-combatants or are you just staying as 'witnesses' and 'out of solidarity'? Is yours the best organisation to play that role: is something being done with the testimony that it provides; how many of your staff have to remain to fulfil this function?
- **Medical assistance:** Medical personnel in particular tend to stay or even move in closer to help the casualties of battlefield actions. The same key questions should be considered: Is it your organisation that has to go in, or can you get others such as soldiers to evacuate the casualties to your more withdrawn and therefore safer health post? How effective an operation can you maintain in the midst of battle? Do you have supplies or are you only providing moral support to local health staff and psychological comfort to wounded combatants? How many of your staff have to stay exposed under these circumstances?

Core advice for staff when coming under fire:

- Don't be macho or a hero. Don't stand around trying to find out where the fire is coming from, who is firing, or what sort of weapon is being fired. This is not the moment to test and develop your knowledge of weaponry. You will not avoid bombs and shells by being a weapons expert.

- Your immediate survival decision whether to stay or to leave, followed by the logical steps resulting from that decision.
- Use the best natural defences you have: your own fear and common sense.
- Seek cover, get out of sight, get out of fire.

7.2 Shelling and Bombing

7.2.1 Types and Tactics

Shelling and rockets may come from howitzers and heavy artillery, from tanks and rocket launchers, or from smaller portable mortars. The most common mortars have a range of about 6km, whereas other types of artillery can have a range of up to 50km. Being behind a hill will be no protection as shells can be lobbed over the hill. Simpler 'Scud' or more sophisticated cruise missiles can cover much greater distances than artillery. Fighter planes can drop bombs, shoot rockets or pepper you from machine guns. Helicopters can fire rockets or use machine guns. Bombs can be dropped from fighter or bomber planes. Bombs or rockets can be launched a long distance to their targets and you will not hear the planes first.

In terms of tactics basic distinctions can be made between 'random or saturation fire', 'predicted fire' and 'observed fire'.

Random or saturation fire

This is highly inaccurate and you are at equal risk wherever you are in the target area. It can be a result of the type of weapon used, such as multiple rocket launchers which 'saturate' an area with shells (used by the Russians against Grozny in the second Chechen war), or 'cluster bombs' which scatter hundreds of smaller 'bomblets' (used by NATO over Kosovo). Or it can be the result of a deliberate tactic, such as an 'artillery barrage' or so-called 'carpet bombing'.

'Predicted' fire

This means that the artillery crew is aiming on the basis of calculations from a map, with no capacity to adjust to a specific target, or that pilots are shooting rockets or dropping bombs at a target more often than not in a single overflight – ie, without a prior trial run or a second return run with a better adjusted aim. The behaviour of pilots and therefore the accuracy of fire from a plane or helicopter depends very much on whether the enemy can detect them early on by radar, and whether they expect to be attacked by anti-aircraft fire or enemy fighter planes. Radar installations, enemy airfields and anti-aircraft installations are primary targets, either through high-altitude attack, missile attack or low-

flying surprise attack. While the enemy may not have the technical means just described it may still dispose of shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles such as were provided to the 'mujahedin' in Afghanistan in the mid-1980s and were suspected to be in the possession of the LTTE at the start of Eelam War 3 in Sri Lanka in 1995. Planes and helicopter gunships then tend to reduce their vulnerability by dropping bombs from high altitude, staying further away from the target, or coming in low in an attempt to surprise. This does not help the accuracy of fire which may very well hit the aid agency compound, however well identified. Consider yourselves to be at high risk.

'Observed' artillery fire/air attack

'Observed' fire means that there are one or more observers who watch where shells/rockets/bombs land, and relay directions for more accurate targeting to the firing crew. There are two commonly used techniques to adjust artillery fire on to the target: 'walking towards you' and 'bracketing'. In both cases the observer first directs the artillery crew to a 'firing line' – an imaginary line between the observer and the target – and then closes in on the target. In 'walking towards you' the shells get successively closer to the target. In 'bracketing', the shells are fired alternately before and beyond the target with the 'bracket' getting smaller and smaller. If you are the target, or very close to it, and alert, you will realise it as the shells start coming closer to you. You may not be the target but in the firing line, in which case the shelling may shift its focus elsewhere. But while the crew is adjusting you may still be hit. With 'observed fire' there is a shorter or longer time interval in which you may be able to get yourself out of the firing line.

7.2.2 Risk Reduction

Reduce risk

In order to reduce risk put yourself in a 'safe' location:

- Do not locate your offices and warehouses close to obvious or likely military targets such as the airfield, military barracks, fuel depots, official buildings, or strategic crossroads, railheads, power stations, radio and TV buildings, etc. If you put staff up in a hotel choose one that is away from potential targets.
- If your agency is in a town of strategic military value that is likely to come under fire move as far to the outskirts or the nearby countryside as you can without losing operational capacity.
- In hilly or mountainous areas avoid siting on high ground where you will be very exposed. Find relative safety from shelling and bombing at the foot of a steep hill or mountain.

Identify your location

The agency flag will not be visible from a distance or on a windless day. Paint the logo in bright colours on the roof and the side walls of the compound to make it visible – though this will not offer protection against random or hasty firing!

On the other hand this may increase the risk because pilots may use, for example, your visibly identified rub halls near the airstrip for better aim.

Reduce potential impact

This may not help much against a direct hit but it can reduce the damage of 'close calls' and the effects from blast and shrapnel.

Glass

A major risk to life and limb are the thousands of small glass fragments blown in by blast. You can reduce this blast effect with wooden planks, shutters, special blast curtains and strong self-adhesive role (transparent polythene sticky roll called '3M's Scotchshield') on the windows and glass door panels. This will not stop shrapnel or bullets, however.

Blast walls

These stop shrapnel and bullets only if correctly built. Use sandbags (alternate between 'stretchers' and 'headers' and build solid corners to strengthen the construction), oil drums or boxes filled with earth and/or rubble or strips of grass pods reinforced by vertical timber stakes. Build blast walls higher than a standing person, except perhaps for the one protecting the route to the shelter behind which you can run crouching. Blast walls themselves should not block passages, certainly not the ones to the shelter! Areas to protect with blast walls are the guard house, the doors and windows of the building, the radio room and fuel depot, and the entrance route to a shelter. You may also want to create a blast wall 'bay' in the house, ideally on the ground floor and in an inner room, ie, with at least two walls between the shell and you. Building a good blast wall requires some expertise (Roberts, 1999, pp75–86). Poorly built blast walls can collapse onto occupants in the house, and therefore themselves can become a danger.

Shelter

The best place is underground, often a cellar. The second best place is the reinforced room on the ground floor, as mentioned above. The ceiling can be reinforced with wooden logs or tree trunks. The larger the shelter, the weaker the construction is likely to be. It would be better to have two smaller ones, although they need to be large enough to accommodate all staff, vital equipment, possibly food and water, and a toilet facility, while also leaving some extra space. Ideally

they should have two exits, so that you can get out if one is blocked by rubble. Shovels, pick-axes, etc, will help if you need to dig yourselves out.

A shelter will not be very helpful if your staff have to run 800 metres to get to it. Set a time-limit, for example, one or two minutes. Any staff in the vicinity who cannot make it from where they normally work within that timeframe need their own shelter/bay nearer at hand. If you are in a town under siege and the authorities have identified or constructed public shelters, no one should set out without clearly knowing where the shelters are along their route.

Refuge trenches and foxholes

If there is a risk of suddenly incoming mortar shells or strafing by low-flying planes or helicopters, you may want to add some emergency trenches/foxholes in which to take immediate cover. Make them deep (2 metres) but narrow, and large enough for two to four people. A good construction is an L-shaped small trench, with two entry/exit points. The top can be protected with tree logs and two layers of sandbags. Remember that these too need maintenance: rain can cause the entrances to crumble and flood them inside. Snakes may also make a fine nest in them.

Thicknesses

You need 20cm of concrete, 40cm of brick, 75cm of sand, 90cm of wood or 1 metre of soil to adequately protect you from small arms fire and blast. A car and a normal house wall alone will not do!

Be prepared and remain alert

When there is an identified risk of shelling or bombing, your protective measures should be in place at all times. When the firing has started it is too late to build a blast wall or stick on the adhesive tape.

If you keep the shutters closed and are routinely concentrated in the central rooms you may not immediately hear shells or planes coming in or the air raid siren. Keep a permanent 'look out' at the entrance who can immediately sound the alarm. If you have to drive around in a danger zone keep the radio off, the window down, and your ears open. You will not always hear a plane: modern bombs, rockets and missiles can be launched from a great distance from the target.

Inform people of your location/movements

- Do you have contacts with the combatants? Are they inclined to want to protect aid agencies? Would such contact compromise your perceived 'neutrality'?

- Can you provide detailed coordinates of the location of your buildings, and/or advance information about the routes and timings of your movements? Does this constitute a communication for 'information' with a request to avoid hitting you, or does it turn into a situation of 'seeking clearance' via prior permission?
- Do the army and air force command communicate with each other? Does the Ministry of Defence pass on information to the operational commands? Can you directly get in direct touch with the operational commands?

Guidelines: What To Do Under Fire (shelling and bombing)

What you do when under fire is partly a matter of situational judgement. It will depend on where you are when the shelling or bombing starts, where it is directed (if at all), and where the nearest effective cover is. In general:

- **Seek immediate cover:** Seek immediate cover in the nearest shelter or emergency trench. Standing around 'studying' the situation, or adopting a fatalistic attitude that a bullet or shell might have 'your name on it', is not appropriate. As aid workers you have a job to do which you can't do if you get injured or killed.
- **Seek solid cover:** If you can't reach the bomb shelter seek cover that protects you not only from glass but also from blast and shrapnel. A tree, a wooden fence, or a car will not do. Something much more solid is needed, for example, several walls, concrete, or rock. If you are very or totally exposed, lie down flat. Exposure to blast can damage your eardrums: remember to cover your ears with your hands and keep your mouth slightly open.'
- **While driving:** When caught while driving it will be your judgement whether to accelerate and try to get out of the firing zone, or abandon the vehicle and seek cover. If the shelling is close by or you are stuck in a convoy you should get out and seek cover away from the vehicle. (In the vehicle you are at risk of flying glass, shrapnel piercing the car or the fuel tank exploding if you are hit by a shell.) If the artillery fire is not too close (yet) and you can drive off, vary your speed or the artillery gunners (on sight or from the dust cloud you throw up) will be able to calculate your movements and aim better. If you drive off under machinegun fire, go for speed. A trained machine gunner will not be much hindered by you alternating your speed.

Under air attack one must always assume that one's vehicle will be targeted. Get out and seek cover.

Preparation for Shelling and Bombing

- Material resources: sandbags and strings to close them, shovels, pick-axes, wood, nails, a saw, etc., to construct shelters and blast walls, and for emergency rescue.
- Skill to build good shelters, blast walls and foxholes.
- Competence in identifying buildings and compounds that can be protected, and where shelter is available.
- Alertness to potential military targets in an area from which one should physically distance oneself.
- Alertness to warning signals, a spotter plane, sounds of planes, anti-aircraft guns opening up in the distance, air raid sirens, civilians running for shelter.
- Psychological preparedness for the nerve-racking effect of the sounds of battle, ie, of incoming shells and bombs and deafening explosions, and preparedness to spend perhaps many hours if not days cramped in a shelter living with uncertainty.
- The mental habit of 'terrain awareness': physically familiarising yourself with the public shelters in town; constantly asking 'where would I take cover here'? when moving around.

7.3 Crossfire and Sniper Fire

7.3.1 The Difference

Crossfire refers to any small arms fire to which you may be vulnerable as it is exchanged between combatants or used indiscriminately against anything that moves. This includes grenades and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG).

Sniper fire is targeted. Snipers are very good shots, who can pick out an individual target from a long range, also while no active battle is ongoing. Snipers may have special rifles with telescopic and night sight. Snipers may be trained experts; they may also be individual 'good shots', a skill perhaps acquired during hunting.

Snipers are deployed to harass the enemy force and cause disruptions to its movement, or to terrorise a larger 'enemy population'. They do this by taking up advanced positions or by infiltrating enemy territory, for example, to target officers or delay a convoy by killing the driver of the first truck, or simply to

cause terror by suddenly and unexpectedly killing a civilian. They operate by stealth and surprise. If their position is distant and not threatened they may maintain it for a long time. In other circumstances they may shoot and kill and then shift position to strike from somewhere else.

7.3.2 Risk Reduction

The best prevention is to stay away from places where small arms fire is exchanged or where snipers operate. In much contemporary warfare, however, you may get caught in sudden crossfire. Also, it is only possible to avoid snipers if they are fairly static or are only 'covering' an identified area. But the presence and reach of a sniper often become known only through his/her casualties.

Guidelines: What To Do Under Fire (crossfire and sniper fire)

Passive measures: 'hardening the target'

Blast walls

When well made and sufficiently thick, blast walls also offer protection from small arms fire (though not from a direct hit by an RPG). Snipers can use armour-piercing bullets which pierce normal blast walls. Their protection then is that they keep you out of sight, rather than out of fire. Stay away from windows and doors; try and get at least two walls between you and the bullets. This will also increase protection from 'ricochets' – bullets bouncing off another object they hit first.

Flakjackets

These are designed to protect parts of the body from blast, flying glass and splinters, and shrapnel. They will not stop a bullet. Ballistic or bullet-proof jackets give more protection. The basic jacket needs to be worn with the ballistic plates and a helmet. They are heavy (up to 12kg) and expensive.

Armoured vehicles

These vehicles with armoured cabins will provide protection from rifle fire and from the blast effects of shells and smaller mines. They are very expensive and so difficult to drive that they often get involved in collisions. The thicker the armour, the heavier the vehicle. Special driving training is needed to handle them. They do not provide adequate protection from a direct hit by artillery, a bomb or an RPG, nor from specialist sniper fire which may use armour-piercing bullets. Unless specifically designed as a mine-proof vehicle (V-shaped underbody) they will not provide adequate

protection from the blast and shrapnel of an anti-tank mine. When driving in an armoured vehicle a helmet and flakjacket or ballistic jacket should also be worn. Armoured vehicles should also move around in pairs.

Evasive action: reducing exposure

Situational judgement

When suddenly under close fire, your staff and yourself will need judgement as to whether to try evasive action, whether to stop the vehicle and jump out, whether to run for cover or drop down and lie flat where you are and wait for a lull in the firing, or crawl on elbows and stomach or roll swiftly towards cover.

Your judgement will be influenced by where you are and how far it is to cover, how close the firing is, and whether or not you are being targeted.

While driving

When under close frontal fire you probably need to stop the vehicle, jump out and seek cover; stopping and reversing or turning and exposing the flank of the vehicle will take too long and leave you an easy target. When trying to take evasive action from small arms fire in a vehicle, go for speed. When there is no choice but to cross a 'killing-zone', again go for speed and/or from cover to cover along the shortest possible route. Avoid 'swerving' or 'zigzagging'; it does not make you harder to hit. In fact it lengthens the route and thereby the time that one is exposed to fire. There is also the risk of a serious car accident.

Solid cover

When seeking cover remember that 'solid' cover is what is needed. Crouching behind an ordinary car may keep you out of sight but not out of fire. 'Solid cover' means rock, a crest of soil, concrete, several layers of bricks etc. Bushes, trees, wooden fences and ordinary cars are not solid cover (there is a lot of misconception about the latter point from TV police shows). When under cover, think. If you have reasonable cover take time to consider your position and options:

- Is it general small arms fire and from which direction, or is it targeted towards you?
- If aimed at you, is it meant as a warning shot to make you retreat, or is it intended to hit you? Is it general small arms fire, or precise sniper fire?

Continued...

The military say that if you wonder whether or not you are being targeted, you are not! In other words, you will know when you are. Experience will teach you the difference in the sound of a very close bullet (a whiplike cracking sound) and bullets at some distance (a hissing or whining sound).

If you want to take a look do not stick your head up from where you went into cover: a rifleman may be waiting precisely for you to do so. Try and move carefully to another observation point without being seen. Beware reflections, for example, from spectacles, binoculars or a camera lens, as this may give your position away.

When and how to shift position

If you have good cover can you retreat from the danger zone safely or not? If not, do you need to move or is time on your side? If the exchange between armed men or from a sniper in a static position, the safest option may be to sit it out. If moving brings you back into sight and therefore into the range of fire, then your moves should not become predictable, for example, running from tree to tree in a straight line and at regular intervals. By the fourth run, a rifleman may be in position to get you. Similarly, if there are more than one move all together in a group. If you go one by one a rifleman will be in position to get the third or fourth member of your party.

Still, it is important to keep things in perspective: you should not assume that in an exchange of fire people aim properly before they shoot. Bullets will be flying everywhere, and not getting hit will be as much a matter of luck as of what you do and don't do.

Preparation for Crossfire and Sniper Fire

- 'Terrain awareness' for small arms and sniper fire.
- Inquire about known sniper areas and 'killing zones'.
- Ability to recognise the sound of a shot, sounds of small arms fire.
- Understanding of the difference between 'out of sight' and 'out of fire'; of what is 'solid' cover and what not.
- Drill to go flat and/or get under cover, then to study the situation and think.
- Basic knowledge about types of injuries caused by types of small arms ammunition and essential do's and don'ts of first aid

7.4 Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Never touch. Never Approach. Mark and report!

7.4.1 Types and Tactics

Types

Mines can generally be categorised into anti-tank and anti-personnel:

- **Anti-tank mines** are larger and have greater explosive power. They typically require a heavier weight or movement to activate, but this may not be the case when they are old and unstable. They will break a tank track and damage part of its suspension, but will cause almost total destruction to a non-armoured vehicle.
- **Anti-personnel mines** are smaller. Some are designed to injure a person by blowing off a hand or foot. Others, however, can do much more serious and lethal damage.
- **Unexploded ordnance** is any type of ammunition ranging from missiles to hand grenades to simple bullets that have been fired but not gone off, as well as fused ordnance that has not been fired. A threat that has gained more attention recently is that of armour-piercing bullets made of depleted uranium. These have been used in the Gulf War and more recently by NATO over Kosovo. They carry the risk of radioactive contamination. A much greater threat, however, is posed by cluster bombs that behave like anti-personnel mines but have a bigger explosive charge and lethal effect.
- **'Booby traps'** can be ordinary-looking objects. The most common ones are not specially designed and manufactured (for example, a pen), but consist of a firing mechanism and explosives linked to items in daily use or attractive (a window shutter, a toy, a lamp, a musical instrument, the winch of a well, a tree branch, etc). The term booby trap is also used to describe the process of linking an anti-personnel mine to an anti-tank mine, or putting a mine on top of a buried drum of petrol.

Impact

Anti-personnel mines injure or kill through blast or fragmentation. Fragmentation mines are mines whose casing breaks into small fragments or which contain fragments that are dispersed upon explosion. Most anti-personnel mines are buried in the ground. Some have a first explosive charge underneath which, when activated, makes the mine 'bound' about 1 metre above the ground where it then explodes causing havoc in all directions.

Directional mines are positioned above ground and attached to trees or fixed objects. They are normally remote-activated but can also be linked to trip wire or booby trap systems. Several anti-personnel mines can kill within a range of 35-50 metres, and cause severe injury up to 100 metres. If you find yourself in a (suspected) minefield, careful extraction is the only option (Section 7.4.4). Just 'walking' in single file does not significantly reduce the risk.

Anti-tank mines do not normally explode when a person walks on them as they need a heavier pressure to be activated. Sometimes an anti-personnel mine is put on top of an anti-tank mine, the smaller explosion causing the detonation of the larger mine. A number of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have protective mechanisms to prevent their being recovered or disarmed. They will explode if you try to do so. That is why you should also not approach.

Some mines are detonated by trip wires which are generally hard to see and are very dangerous. Some mines have fusing systems that are pull-activated: they detonate when pressure is put on the trip wire. Others are triggered by pressure release: they detonate when the trip wire is cut. Never try to cut a trip wire! Don't approach and don't touch. If you come across a trip wire, leave the area in the direction you came from checking systematically for trip wires along your extraction route, and avoiding them. Note that trip wires are not put only at ankle height, but can be higher, for example, at breast level.

Some anti-personnel mine systems are interconnected and have sensors. If someone approaches one mine will explode. The others will explode when a second person approaches – for example, a rescue team – to help the victim of the first mine.

Most mines have a metallic content which is why metal detectors are used. In some situations, notably with some mine types that have no or minimal metal content or in metal-saturated ground, metal detectors will be of limited use. Some mines have a magnetic-influenced, anti-handling device – ie, the magnetic field of the metal detector will trigger detonation. Fortunately these are rare.

Tactics

Mines are generally laid for three purposes:

1. **As part of a battle strategy:** Armed groups lay mines to defend their military positions, to disrupt enemy movements, to try and deny the enemy access to a certain route, and/or to channel the enemy on to a certain route. Minefields can therefore be expected around bunkers and trenches, static tank positions, on and/or alongside bridges and roads, etc. Where towns and cities are

besieged both sides may be laying mines: the defenders to disrupt an attack, the attackers to prevent the defenders from getting supplies and from breaking out. Mines are often laid in non-systematic ways: they can be 'scattered' into enemy territory from planes and helicopters, or delivered by artillery. In guerrilla or (counter-) insurgency warfare, many groups plant mines indiscriminately without ever keeping or passing on records. It is not surprising therefore that forces of the same group wander into minefields laid by their colleagues. Knowledge of where major sieges and battles have taken place and of where major defensive positions were, as well as more daily 'terrain awareness', will make you more alert to obvious risk areas.

2. **Around socioeconomic targets:** Targets such as power pylons, water and electricity plants, a railroad junction, etc., can also be surrounded by mines to protect them from sabotage and attack.
3. **To cause general terror and dislocation:** Mines are also used in more 'generalised' warfare where civilians and their assets are targeted: grazing and agricultural land, irrigation canals, wells, forest areas where firewood is collected, temples and even village paths can be mined. The purpose is to dislocate the local population who may be providing infrastructural support to the enemy, and to create discontent among them that could be directed at the enemy forces.

The purpose of booby traps can be to prevent the removal of other explosives. More commonly they are planted to complicate and render more 'costly' the re-occupation by enemy forces and/or civilians, usually of a built-up area that is being abandoned by the force installing the booby traps.

People planting mines may well be smart: they will anticipate the reactions of an enemy force, or of civilians. Hence a bridge over a shallow river may be mined, but so too will the slopes next to it for those who cross through the water instead. A major access road may be mined – with alternative access roads perhaps mined as well.

Case Study: 'Anticipatory' Mining

In 1995 an NGO vehicle hit an anti-tank mine on a road in Central Africa. The force of the explosion hurled the double-cabin, pick-up vehicle 12 metres and turned it round completely. Two passengers were killed and three injured. During the night anti-personnel mines were planted around the wreck. The next day a local woman who had come to look stepped on one and lost her leg.

Mines also 'migrate': they are moved by rain, flooding, mudslides, tidal action on the beach, etc. Eight years after the war in Mozambique the heavy flooding in early 2000 swept mines potentially anywhere and destroyed the existing markings of identified mined areas.

7.4.2 Seeking Out and Sharing Information

The golden rule: actively inquire (also when the war is over)

Nobody is likely to come to you and volunteer information or ask what your movement plans are in order to give you warning. Your predecessor may even forget to brief you properly in the course of a handover! You must inquire yourself, and collate information from various sources. When the war is over mines do not disappear because the fighting has stopped. Mines (and UXOs) can remain active for decades.

Specialist information sources

Prior to departure obtain general information about the mines in a country (eg, from the *Landmines Monitor Report* compiled by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining and published by Human Rights Watch et al, 1999).

Specialist humanitarian de-mining agencies (such as the Mines Advisory Group and Halo Trust in the UK, Handicap International in France and Belgium, and Norwegian People's Aid) may be able to offer information or referral to sources (see RRN Network Paper 32 on humanitarian de-mining for contacts and other information on the mines sector)

In-country, your main sources of general and locality-specific information will be:

- a national mine action agency and/or the local authorities and security forces;
- de-mining organisations working in-country, and a central UN mine action centre, if there is one;
- UN military observers/peacekeepers;
- hospitals and health posts where mine casualties may be seen;
- your own staff;
- local people.

Local knowledge

When venturing into a new area where there is active fighting or there has been in the past, always stop regularly and inquire actively from local people.

Making time to inquire

While this takes time, it may save lives. In addition, you can learn something about the area you are going through and can explain who you are. Build this extra time into your journey plan (Chapter 8).

The quality of inquiry

The more precise your questions the more likely you are to get a precise answer. Rather than asking in general whether there are mines and/or whether a road is used, inquire about:

- how long the respondent(s) have been (back) in the area;
- the local history of fighting;
- the local history of accidents: have there been cases of vehicles; and also people and especially animals being hit by mines, and when and where?
- where local people do/don't go;
- whether the respondent him/herself has been using the road, and if so, when, and how far?
- how the respondent/village people use the road: only walking and/or on bicycles? In which case anti-tank mines may not have been detonated and will remain a danger. Be careful about definitions: in Mozambique, for example, people classify a bicycle as a vehicle!

The quality of local knowledge

Do not overestimate the reliability of local knowledge. For example, if people were refugees and have only recently returned they will not know where the mined areas are. Even if they have been around for a long time they may not know.

Case Study: Limitations to Local Knowledge

Two years after the end of the civil war in Ethiopia in 1991, an aid agency vehicle drove down a dirt road in the north. Several local people accompanied the agency staff, and other vehicles had occasionally used the road. Nevertheless, they were all killed by an anti-tank mine that had been buried in the middle of the road. Upon inquiry, former guerrilla fighters confirmed that they had put two anti-tank mines on that road in the past, and that only one had been recovered. The local people did not know this.

The fact that most of the mine casualties every year are local people indicates that they are not necessarily an accurate source of information. Moreover, even if they are knowledgeable, they often take risks: they simply have to venture into uncleared areas for economic reasons and/or to recycle mines for scrap metal, explosives for fishing, or even doorstops or weights.

Local people may also (re) plant mines to protect their assets such as a well, a granary, a contested piece of land, etc. Ask about this, and only move around with local people on their own terrain.

Case Study: Civilians Recycle Mines

Virtually all Albanian Kosovars returned to Kosovo in the summer of 1999. Most inhabitants of a village on the border, however, had remained in Albania. UN peacekeepers who were de-mining the heavily mined border area found that some local villagers had recycled mines and put them on the forest tracks crossing the border from Albania to prevent Albanian citizens coming to loot the houses in their village.

Local people may become over-confident and act foolishly. Do not trust untrained people to handle mines and UXOs. You may very well be invited by villagers to take a look at their cupboard full of such 'curiosa' or recycled pieces, or at a 'work party' digging up mines. Any of these items may be unstable and explode even if it has been handled before. Stay away or leave immediately.

Most mined areas are not clearly marked by the military or de-mining organisations. Local people often create their own 'warning signals', but these are hard for outsiders to identify. They may be no more than a small heap of pebbles or two crossed branches lying at the start of a path. Actively inquire from local people what signals they use, and whether a common system is used: if everybody does it his/her own way, there is no 'signal'.

Report the information

It is not common practice for aid workers to circulate the information they obtain about mines. Yet wherever possible mines or mined areas should be marked and reported, ideally with a sketch map if you have nothing else. Aid agencies involved in curative medical work should actively report on the profile of cases they see due to accidents, violence and mines.

7.4.3 Risk Reduction

Guidelines: Basic Do's and Don'ts for Risk Reduction

Don't touch, don't approach, but mark and report.

- **UXOs:** Generally visible, although they can be partly or even wholly buried. Presume they are unstable and can explode simply when touched. Never touch them. Mark their position and inform the authorities. In certain countries there is an active scrap metal/recycling industry and UXOs are touched and handled. Even when handled several times, they may still contain explosive and can detonate at any time.
- **Booby traps:** The object that is booby-trapped is generally visible, but not the explosive linked to it. Presume that virtually anything in an uncleared and not yet re-inhabited, or only recently and partially re-inhabited area, can be booby trapped. Don't touch anything, don't pick anything up, do not push shutters or doors, etc. Don't 'explore' empty buildings or ruins, even for the 'call of nature'.
- **Mines:** Generally not visible. Never touch; don't try to remove; don't try to make them explode by throwing rocks at them, etc. If you know that mines have been used in the conflict, and you are not absolutely certain that the road is clear, don't venture on it. If you notice a mine, mark the location very clearly and inform the authorities.

Possibly the most common situation in which aid workers expose themselves to high-risk areas is on assessment missions. Ask how essential the trip is – not for agency profile and fundraising for new project work, but effectively to meet need? If you go into a high-risk or unknown area, should you be (among) the first to go? If a route between certain locations is known to be occasionally mined (eg, by guerrillas) do you have to drive. Could you fly? Could several agencies pool resources to charter a plane?

Impact reduction

A non-armoured vehicle cannot be protected from an anti-tank mine. However, some people believe the risk of serious injury can be reduced by putting sandbags about 10cm thick on the cabin floor under each passenger, as well as

a layer or two of sandbags in the back of a truck. Unfortunately this may make all the difference in terms of downward pressure which makes an anti-tank mine explode. You also risk being blinded by sandblast if you run over a mine. A marginally better trick might be to fill the wheels with water, although this works best with larger truck wheels because of the volume needed to make a difference.

Remain alert and cautious

- When driving, avoid your vehicle being the first on the road. If commercial traffic uses the road don't set out at 5am but rather go later on after other vehicles have passed. If in a convoy protected by the military allow military vehicles to go first.
- When driving, try and use tarmac roads only. Avoid driving into potholes as these may be mined. When the tarmac suddenly ends and becomes a dirt track and you have no status report beyond, it may be wiser to turn back.
- Instruct your driver and insist on his/her discipline in:
 - sticking to well-travelled routes and not going cross-country;
 - always driving in existing tracks;
 - not driving over obstacles on the road (a big branch or some debris that may conceal a mine) nor driving round them without first checking whether the road surface has been disturbed (the obstacle might be placed there precisely to 'channel' you on to a mine on the other side of the road);
 - not driving on to the sides of the road to avoid an obstacle, to turn round, to overtake another vehicle or to give way to an oncoming vehicle: the sides of the road may (still) be mined.
- Watch for 'obvious' signs: a crater from an explosion, a torn shoe, the carcass of an animal, a wrecked vehicle, a road that appears not to be used, a field that is overgrown and not cultivated in an otherwise (re-) populated area, a building with the roof, shutters and doors intact while other buildings have had these looted/ removed, etc.
- Stay on the beaten track. Never walk off the road or path into the bushes or an abandoned building to go and relieve yourself.
- Look out for marked areas. Professional de-mining teams will put up very visible markings of known or suspected mined areas. Local people may use their own signals. Note, however, that markings could have collapsed or become less visible or covered by rain, snow, mud, etc. Note also that you may sometimes see a mark, without being clear as to which side of the mines it is.
- If in doubt, turn back! This is probably one of the most difficult recommendations for an aid worker to absorb or to instil into her/his colleagues, as by nature aid workers tend to be enterprising and adventurous and committed to alleviating the needs of others, and not properly concerned about their own safety. Nobody is helped by your losing life or limb.

- Leisure can kill. Expatriates, often more than local people, tend to go for walks in the countryside for leisure. It is relaxing and helps release the stress. In such a situation your alertness to danger may be lower, particularly if there is no fighting in your area. The area may still be mined!

Guidelines: What to Do in a (suspected) Mined Area

Mines are seldom planted alone. Your basic assumption must be:

Where there is one mine, there are more.

When a mine explodes or you suspect that you are in a mined area:

Never act impulsively.

- Do not jump out of your vehicle if it has exploded a smaller mine but is not on fire.
- Do not drive impulsively up to another vehicle that has hit a mine.
- Do never rush in to help another person who has just been injured by a mine.

Control yourself and your colleagues and act carefully and cautiously to avoid more casualties.

Extraction

The basic principle of extraction is to retrace your steps or return along the tracks that you followed to get to where you became stuck. This is easier in theory than in practice.

Evacuating a vehicle

When your vehicle has hit a mine but is not on fire or at risk of further explosion, evacuate it in a controlled manner. You should not step on the ground around it except in the tracks where you have driven, behind the vehicle. So climb out through the rear door, or from the back by first getting on the roof, and step in your own tracks. When you are on solid tarmac or the vehicle tracks are sufficiently visible, you can walk back – in single file and spaced out – to the last known safe point, or to a point where you think there is no more risk of mines. When the tracks are not clearly visible you must prepare yourselves for an extraction process with prodding that will

Continued...

probably take several hours. If night falls you must prepare for a probably uncomfortable night until dawn allows you to get back to work.

Prodding

Prodding means that you search cautiously every inch of ground before you step on to it. You should first ascertain that there are no trip wires before you start prodding. Mines can be triggered by trip wires. Trip wires look like fishing lines or thick spider threads; they are barely visible and can be covered by leaves and branches. The trip wire feeler helps you identify them. Place it horizontally in front of you holding it between thumb and forefinger. Then gently raise it, keeping it horizontal. As soon as you encounter any resistance immediately release the pressure and check whether it is a trip wire. Try and find another path avoiding the trip wire. Never touch or try to cut a trip wire: some trip wires will cause a mine to detonate when pressure is put on them but some work through tension release. If you cut a tight trip wire the mine will also explode.

Next delineate a space shoulder-length wide and systematically prod it. The best way is to lie prone (first clear an area before you stretch out), otherwise do it kneeling or crouching. Prodding means sticking the prodder carefully into the soil at an angle of 30 degrees, gently feeling for any hard object. If you come upon a hard object – and in stony ground there may be hundreds – very carefully clear the side of it until you can see what it is. If it is a mine never touch it or try to remove it, but mark it and move your prodding path around it. You will have to control your anxiety and impatience and that of your colleagues to get out.

Rescue

Few situations are as difficult to confront as someone stepping on a mine in your vicinity. Staff should be carefully instructed:

- Never to rush in to help, even if the victim is screaming for help and risks bleeding to death. They should always bear in mind that where there is one mine there are likely to be others, and no one is helped by increasing the number of victims.
- Only to attempt a planned and controlled rescue operation when the victim is still alive, when no specialist teams can be called to the site within a reasonable time, and when there is a reasonable chance that they themselves will not become further victims.

In essence a rescue operation will consist of:

- Talking to the victim and getting the message across that s/he should not move as there may be more mines in his/her vicinity.
- From the closest safe spot checking an access area of about 1.5 metres wide by prodding. Also clearing an area around the victim to allow first aid to be administered. Checking carefully under the limbs and body of the victim for other mines.
- First aid will consist of trying to stop the bleeding by putting bandages on serious wounds. If there is no pressure bandage available or it doesn't work, a tourniquet should be applied a little above the wound. The risk of gangrene is often greater than that of haemorrhage: a tourniquet has to be released for at least 30 seconds every 10 minutes to control the risk of gangrene. If there are broken bones likely to swing during transport, you should try to bandage them to a limb or a splint.
- Don't give the victim any food or drink if you are not absolutely certain that the digestive track is not pierced (and you are unlikely to be able to determine this for sure).
- Extract the victim only along the path you have cleared. Wrap the patient in a blanket and continue talking to help stave off shock while transporting him/her to the nearest medical facility.

Recovering a damaged vehicle

Care is equally required in the operation to recover a vehicle damaged by a mine. The risk of other mines is real.

Case Study: All Staff Need to be Knowledgeable!

In 1994 an aid agency truck was slightly damaged in the rear by a home-made mine planted, as it turned out, by a small rebel group. Its crew and food cargo were rescued and loaded on to a commercial vehicle that had been following the truck. Shortly afterwards, the agency's area manager had to intervene to prevent the team of nationally recruited mechanics from going out with another truck to recover the damaged one, without any preparation or caution. He established radio communication and medical back-up and went along. Close to the site of the incident, an escort of army soldiers was picked up as guard against further rebel activity. As it turned out, the soldiers, experienced former guerrilla fighters, proved extremely careless. The project manager again had to intervene very firmly to ensure that the damaged truck was approached and pulled out with the greatest possible caution.

7.5 Preparation and Training

Appropriate training

As a manager you need to consider the following:

1. What do you want to train people for?
2. Who needs to be trained in what?
3. What do the staff need? What can be mere awareness; what must be knowledge; and what must be 'skill through drill'?
4. Who can provide the right training for you?

Training aid workers about mines (but not UXOs) has become more frequent. Some of this training, however, has very little impact because it is poorly conceived. It is about mine awareness rather than about operating in a potentially mined area. Typically, the technical names and characteristics of various mines are presented with the help of slides and posters. The key advice given is: stay away from mined areas. The training is further animated by the display of mines on a table, perhaps with a series of slides of parts of mined landscapes or wreckage from mines and a short exercise in which course participants are made to tread on a buried dummy mine or against a trip wire. This may be necessary but is far from sufficient.

Awareness: Staff need to be aware that mines and UXOs constitute a major danger at all times; also in post-conflict situations; potentially almost everywhere. But preparation for operating in a potentially mined area demands good knowledge and an emphasis on personal movement and behavioural discipline.

Basic knowledge: Some of the core knowledge about mines, UXOs and booby traps includes: where one might expect them and therefore how to avoid them; locally used warning signs; misconceptions about mines; mine clearance and local knowledge, and what to do if it is uncertain whether or not an area is mined; the do's and don'ts when one is confronted with mines; how to get out of a (suspected) minefield; and reporting on identified or suspected mined areas.

Skill and drill: Above all, mine training should emphasise behavioural discipline. Aid agency staff will generally not heed the advice to turn back when in doubt, unless that message has been instilled in them through simulation exercises and reinforced in daily operations by programme managers. In high-risk areas, the drill should include

inquiring from local people, discipline while moving, extraction from a vehicle and then from an area by feeling for trip wires and prodding.

First aid training: If you are operating in an area where specialist rescue is more or less everywhere at hand, such as in Kosovo in late 1999/early 2000, your staff may not need training in first aid. But that will be the exception. Staff operating in more remote areas away from specialist support will need basic medical training

Note: Such training is more staff- and time-intensive, and likely to be costly.

Quality briefing

New staff arriving in an operational area where there are known to be minefields and mine risks should be briefed in detail. Ideally you will actively familiarise them with the vicinity and point out known mine areas and the signals that help to identify them. Real life exposure and visual memory will stick more thoroughly than verbal and/or written information. A proper briefing should also instil the necessity of marking any (suspected) mined areas that the staff member may come across, and reporting in detail on this.

Supervision and reminding

Managers and supervisors should regularly remind their staff of the importance of remaining alert to the dangers of mines. On a field trip do not hesitate to challenge a staff member over undisciplined or careless movement decisions.

Essential equipment

What to take with you in risk areas:

- a radio in the car;
- if possible hand-held radios for those moving away from the car while one person stays with the car;
- a good first aid kit – take it along when you go on foot;
- prodding/feeling equipment (a prodder can be a long screwdriver or a strong knife with a blade 12–15cm long. A trip wire feeler is a light, flexible rod 100–130cm long, a thin piece of strong wire or a flexible stalk or branch).

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8 Vehicle Safety and Travel Security

Road accidents remain a major cause of injury and death for aid workers. At least half of all security incidents occur during travel.

8.1 Risk Reduction

8.1.1 Vehicle Choice and Safety

Vehicle choice

Choice of vehicle can impact on safety and security. Consider, from a safety but also from a security point of view, the choice of 2-wheel or 4-wheel drive vehicles, passenger vehicles or pick-ups, diesel or gasoline engines, new or secondhand vehicles, engine and fuel tank size, short or long wheel base. New 4-wheel drive passenger vehicles are very popular among aid agencies – and among warlords and car-jackers!

Vehicle safety

Condition of the vehicle

Vehicle safety partly depends on the vehicle being in good working order: water, oil and fuel levels checked, tyres in good condition, seat belts installed and used, essential equipment (jack, spare tyres, first aid kit, etc) present. Make sure that drivers check their vehicles daily, that vehicles are cross-checked before serious journeys, that you identify a quality garage, and that a logistics manager keeps a servicing and maintenance schedule. You do not want the vehicle to break down at a critical moment. Car users need to be taught basic emergency repair techniques.

Safe driving

Safety on the road further depends on safe driving. This tends to be a major problem area for expatriates and local drivers alike. Usually the driving conditions carry a heightened risk: less disciplined driving behaviour under an 'emergency' mentality; animals, cyclists and push carts on the main roads; sections of a road under repair not marked or illuminated at night; muddy rural tracks, dangerous mountain roads, crossing rivers after heavy rains, etc.

Safe driving requires mastery of the:

- **Vehicle:** Mastering your vehicle means, eg, knowing how to operate a 4-wheel drive vehicle properly, knowing the capacities of the engine under various circumstances (acceleration, steep uphill, etc) and appreciating the stability of the vehicle on different types of surfaces.
- **Terrain:** Mastering the terrain means being able to drive safely and competently on, for instance, sandy or icy tracks, on mountain roads, or being able to cross a river bed.
- **Traffic:** Mastering the traffic means understanding that many other road users do not obey traffic rules or drive in disciplined ways. It will be crucial to adopt an anticipatory or 'defensive' driving style.

All drivers need to be trained for this.

Speed

Speeding always increases the risk of road accidents. In practice both expatriates and local drivers often need to be tightly disciplined or speeding will occur. Only in exceptional circumstances, for example, in a zone with potential sniper fire, can high speed be justified.

Seat belts

The procedure should be that seat belts should always be worn. Only very exceptionally when there is a high security risk of aerial attack (Chapter 7) or armed robbery/car-jacking on the road, can a situational judgement be made not to wear seatbelts; under such circumstances you would want to be able to get out of the car as quickly as possible.

Windows

At moments of higher security risk it is advisable to drive with the windows down and the music off in order to hear planes approaching or small arms fire. Under shelling or bombing this will also prevent glass splinters being blown inwards by blast. In winter conditions or in very dusty environments this will be difficult; at least maintain silence in the car in these environments.

The radio aerial

The radio aerial on the car should not be put on or taken off or even touched unless the radio is switched off to avoid getting radio frequency burn (Chapter 17).

8.1.2 Drivers and Safety and Security

Recruitment

The recruitment of drivers is a critical management issue for at least three reasons:

- they need to be technically competent and safe drivers;
- travelling a lot, and being able to influence decisions at critical moments, means that drivers have an important role to play in security management;
- as they come into contact with a lot of people, drivers informally represent your organisation and therefore affect the image that people form of you.

When recruiting, therefore, there are various criteria you must consider:

- valid driving licence;
- language skills (essential or desirable);
- good eyesight (test);
- driving experience and driving record;
- technical competence in maintenance and repair (test);
- driving style in difficult terrain and undisciplined traffic (test);
- reliability (don't recruit people with links to criminal gangs intent on stealing your cars; get a social reference; Chapter 20).

Moreover, in insecure environments you may also want to consider other aspects:

- ethnic identity;
- local language skills;
- age and temperament (is s/he likely to be observant of rules and regulations; how will s/he behave in a threatening situation) ;
- analytical and observational skills (can the driver communicate a useful report on an incident?).

Driver training

When you have a number of drivers it is worthwhile training two or three of them as driver-trainers. They in turn can then train other drivers in driving safely. You could hire a driver-trainer on an interagency basis or find a competent person locally.

Induction, briefing and training

Drivers not only need training and supervision, they also benefit from briefings and training.

- As they informally represent your organisation they need to be able to give a succinct but accurate picture of what your organisation is, what it does in the country, and what its status is in the conflict.
- As drivers are vulnerable to security incidents and need to observe the overall situation from a security point of view, they need essential security training.
- Regular driver meetings, with the logistics manager and/or security manager present, can reinforce their ability and effectiveness from a logistics and security point of view.

Driving policy

Establish a driving policy for staff who are not drivers: can other national and international staff drive vehicles? If so, under what conditions? This can involve introducing driving tests and training for others. As for the drivers, this policy should clarify liabilities in case of an accident caused by an agency staff member.

8.1.3 Approaches to Passengers and Accidents

Drivers and senior programme staff travelling in vehicles should have a clear understanding of your 'approach' to picking up passengers who are not employees of your organisation, and to accidents involving other people. The term 'approach' has been chosen deliberately because, unlike rules and regulations, it will be partly influenced by your security strategy (Chapter 5). In practice you will probably combine strict rules with guidelines and situational judgement.

Rules could be such that:

- no weapons can be carried in your agency vehicles;
- no cargo other than that of the agency can be transported;
- your vehicle cannot be driven by anybody who is not an (authorised) employee of the organisation;
- a vehicle on-mission should not be left unattended (ie, perhaps guarded by a local person).

Passengers

You may choose to provide guidelines regarding passenger policy. These can be printed onto a laminated card in the local language(s) for drivers to show that they are acting under orders. It is of course possible to insist that nobody other than identified aid agency employees can be taken as passengers in your vehicle. However, this may be untenable and self-defeating: in many situations you may have to take a local person as guide to find the route, or you may give local people in your project area or who have provided you with hospitality a

lift as a measure of reciprocal hospitality and building up good relationships. You could have a 'waiver of liability' document in the car which you make any passenger who is not an employee of the organisation sign when they travel with you. But if the social custom holds that in cases of injury or death of a passenger compensation is paid by the 'socially recognised host', you must acknowledge that your 'signed paper' will have little local value. If you are concerned about liability and payment of compensation you would do better to discuss this in advance with community leaders and the close relatives of your passenger.

Soldiers

'Lifts' to soldiers are another difficult issue. You may be strict about not giving lifts if they carry arms; but what if they are not armed but in uniform, or sick or wounded? Again, an element of situational judgement may come into play:

- Is your agency operating in a zone where several opposing parties move about and where its image of 'neutrality' can easily be compromised?
- Is it operating in a zone of criminal activity where it may need temporary (armed) protection?

Causing an accident

It will be important to have guidelines on how to react in case of an accident, especially if it causes injury or death of local people. In certain countries the advice might be to stop and help the victim; in others not to stop but to continue onto the nearest police post or agency office as bystanders are likely to attack the driver and his vehicle whether or not the accident was his fault. If this is the case your agency, perhaps with the local police, needs to come back and sort out the matter. Do not leave disputes unresolved (Chapter 4): local people may attack the property of your agency or others in revenge later on! While guidelines may differ between areas in the same country this should not prevent you from using your situational judgement. Note also that a situation can turn 'understanding' or 'hostile' depending on how you behave at a critical moment (Chapter 18).

8.1.4 Protective Devices

Protection against theft

There are a number of devices that help protect vehicles from theft: lockable fuel filler cap, lockable wheel nuts and a strong steering lock are all easy to install. An electronic immobiliser may need some specialist input. A hidden fuel cut-off switch can prevent car robbers from getting very far. Avoid, however, instant fuel cut-off devices as you may become the target of the anger/frustration

of the attackers if they can't get the vehicle running. A simpler measure, for overnight protection and when facing the risk of looting, is to remove the distributor rotors from petrol engines, to release the air from all tyres, or even to remove the tyres for the night. Removing injectors from diesel engines is not so simple: when reinstalling them all the air will have to be bled from the fuel system before it will work and although many modern engines are largely self-bleeding, it still thrashes the battery to turn over the engine to bleed it. It may also lead to dirt getting into the fuel lines and injector failure just when you don't need it. On the other hand, removing some of the fuel pipework can be just as effective in disabling a diesel engine vehicle, and is less trouble to restore. Of course all these measures can increase the frustration and aggressiveness of would-be robbers, and also hamper your escape when you need to move away fast.

Radios

Radios are generally very helpful devices as they allow others to monitor vehicle movements and drivers to report on problems and call for assistance when/if stuck. But they also defeat any attempted strategy of keeping a 'low profile': driving around with huge antennae marks you as very visible 'outsiders' and perhaps as worthwhile targets for militias or criminals.

Vehicle tracking system

The decision to install a tracking system will depend on cost considerations but also on what you want to do with it. A tracking system follows a vehicle and can indicate its location on maps stored in the control station computer – on a regular basis or in response to a distress signal. It can also be programmed to send a warning signal when the vehicle is approaching an exclusion zone that you yourself have defined. It can therefore have a preventive function, ie, to signal to the vehicle's occupants that they are entering a high-risk area or crossing a border that is not physically marked. A precondition, however, is that you input good maps with precise geographical coordinates and geographically demarcate the exclusion zones. Locating the vehicle following a distress call is useful but it does not tell you what the problem is, nor does it on its own put you in a better position to respond. Finally, in principle this system will enable you to track and locate a stolen vehicle. This is useful provided that someone is willing and has the capacity to chase and retrieve the vehicle.

Flashing lights

In areas with a risk of aerial attack agencies have installed blue or orange flashing lights on the roofs of their vehicles to increase their visibility and identification. However, do monitor that armed forces do not copy your practice or it will lose its protective value.

Essential documents

Keep a list of engine and chassis numbers of all your vehicles. One day it may be proof that the vehicle once belonged to you before it was stolen (Chapter 15).

8.1.5 Journey Planning

When going on a journey that carries a certain risk, two key principles apply: think through your journey in advance; and establish a journey monitoring system. Journey planning takes time. This is no reason not to do it. The additional complications that arise when a problem occurs and that result from not having prepared in advance will take even more time. If you travel regularly in the same area you will not have to start from scratch each time; you can simply revive and perhaps adapt an earlier journey plan. Plan your journey with a map.

Guidelines: Planning Your Journey

- Keep your journey plan confidential if there is a risk of targeted attack.
- Study the route and all possible problem points from a natural perspective (eg, flooding, snowed up passes, etc) or that of man-made conditions (known checkpoints, good areas for ambush, etc) and from lack of information (where might you get lost?).
- Estimate travel times rather than distances, and plan your journey so that you arrive well before nightfall or curfew hours. Build in time for local inquiries, eg, about the risk of mines (Chapter 7). Anticipate possible delays and build these into your timing. You can then indicate estimated departure time, arrival time and return time.
- Emergency options: are there alternative routes, fall-back places where you might get help, or find security?
- Establish a monitoring system: radio call times, from where and at what intervals; who decides about deviations from the journey as planned – the 'leader' on the journey or a senior person at base? Define code words or coded phrases if necessary (Chapter 15).
- Inspect and prepare the vehicles in advance: have they been serviced and are they ready? Do you have all the necessary equipment depending on the context and possible scenarios? Do you have all the necessary documentation for vehicles and passengers to show any authorities you may encounter? Are copies of all key documents available at base?

Team briefing and debriefing

Prior to departure it is useful to have a team briefing in which the journey plan is reviewed and discussed so that everyone is well informed. Equally good practice would be to suggest that a returning team is debriefed on any changes encountered in the travel on the route taken.

Exploratory missions

It will be quite common to venture into unknown territory on an exploratory/assessment mission. Take the time to inquire about the 'landscape' ahead of you, ask questions of local people, and stop regularly to ask more of people you meet on the road. If a local guide is accompanying you, elicit details before you set out. You will probably have experienced the tendency of local people to seriously underestimate travel times if asked for a straightforward answer to 'how long will it take'? A more useful approach is perhaps to ask for details of the route ahead, useful reference points, road conditions, etc, and to work these through on a sketch map. When venturing into 'unmapped territory' notes should be taken on the route and sketch maps drawn for the benefit of those following after. Keep track of distances using the mileage counter.

8.1.6 Checkpoints

Aid agencies tend to focus on the checkpoint as a critical moment in a journey. This is generally correct: armed men manning a checkpoint can harass, intimidate and even threaten you. The situation can spin out of control because they are already tense or drunk when you arrive, or because they find offence in what you represent, carry, say or do. Staff interaction with those at the checkpoint will influence how your agency is perceived and how other aid personnel trying to pass it after you will be dealt with.

Rapid assessment

Not all checkpoints are equally critical. A key skill to develop – which also requires constant alertness and quickness of mind – is the 'assessment at a glance' at what type of checkpoint you are dealing with: where it is located, who is manning it, and what appears to be their mood. Checkpoints at crossroads, bridges, mountain passes, town entrances and exits, etc, are to be expected and are likely to have been set up for the general monitoring of all passers-by. Checkpoints in the middle of a forest or on a mountain road away from habitation may exist for a more ominous purpose. Checkposts manned by regular army and police forces may be less problematic than those manned by irregulars. Checkposts manned by drunken, frightened or recently defeated and revengeful soldiers can be more problematic than those manned by bored troops on duty. If a checkpoint looks or 'feels'

suspicious, stop some distance away and study the situation. This in turn may arouse suspicion among those manning the checkpoint: if you proceed have an acceptable and defusing answer ready about why you stopped.

When approaching a checkpost, signal clearly that you have no harmful intentions:

- put the car radio on very low volume or turn it off (it is generally not advisable to start talking over the radio while at a checkpost. Inform base before approaching it and resume contact when you have passed it. Turn it off if you feel that it might attract unwelcome attention);
- put the window down;
- after dark turn on the light inside the car cabin so that all passengers are clearly visible;
- slow down;
- stop the car a few yards from a barrier, but always keep the engine running unless ordered otherwise. If there is more than one vehicle, the next one keeps a certain distance;
- take off sunglasses so that people can see your face and eyes;
- avoid any brusque movements in the car, and keep your hands clearly up and visible.

The spokesperson should be identified beforehand. Drivers often play a lead role either because they talk the team through the checkpoint or because they also act as translator. They should have a clear understanding when to switch role from spokesperson to translator.

Any team member could potentially be interrogated. It is therefore necessary for all to know what cargo the vehicle carries and to have the same story about what their organisation does and what the purpose of the journey is.

It is useful to carry small 'presents': cigarettes, sweets and pens are common, but in certain situations a tape with local music or local newspapers or magazines may be highly appreciated. However, try not to use them if you can avoid it. There are ample examples of 'inflationary' demands for 'presents' by people manning checkpoints.

All passengers should have identification in the local language(s) on them other than their passports, and passports should not be handed over if it can be avoided. If asked to go inside a guardroom, try to avoid leaving the vehicle unattended. If one of the vehicle occupants is considered 'vulnerable' or 'at risk', accompany that person if s/he is called away from the vehicle for interrogation or document inspection.

8.1.7 Convoys

Convoys and security

There are some general guidelines for convoys but you also need to consider what sort of convoy: two or three passenger vehicles of NGOs driving together to reduce the risk of road banditry; a food convoy as often run by the WFP; a convoy of returnees as run by UNHCR; or a convoy evacuating people at risk, as sick and elderly, perhaps run by the International Red Cross.

How does the type of convoy relate to security? A big convoy may reduce risk through strength in numbers, but it also moves more slowly. It can also portray an image of power and wealth, which can stir up resentment. And it may be mistaken from afar for an army column on the move. Smaller convoys may be more vulnerable to ambush but are perhaps easier to negotiate through checkpoints and less likely to come under aerial attack. Consider your context.

The type of convoy will depend on:

- **Vehicle composition:** the numbers and types of vehicles, and the type of cargo. This will determine the length and speed.
- **The 'human population':** busloads of passengers have special requirements in terms of water, food, comfort, medical care, etc.
- **The organisational composition:** convoys need to be managed, but convoys composed of vehicles and/or passengers from different organisations need additional coordination. One component of this will be the 'image' projected by its constituent elements, which will reflect on the collective image. If one vehicle is full of rowdy aid workers who turn up the radio volume and dress in culturally inappropriate ways, by association this will reflect on the others.

The convoy leader

A 'convoy' must have a leader. When different agencies participate in a convoy, or when they join a convoy under armed protection from national army troops or international peacekeepers, there is often reluctance to accept leadership. This can affect discipline. It is incorrect, however, to join a convoy for one's own security and then try and 'change the rules' or break the convoy discipline. This stimulates lack of discipline in risk environments and creates bad feelings among different actors. This in turn undermines the solidarity and collectivity when confronted with a threat.

Guidelines: How to Prepare For and Manage a Convoy

Planning the journey

- Draw up a journey plan and establish an assembly point and assembly time well before departure.
- Obtain precise details of all vehicles to be expected, the passengers and cargo.
- Inform yourself about all documentation that will be required.

Constituting the convoy

Think about how to order the line of vehicles. This will depend on the number and types of vehicles there are and what cargo and resources they are carrying, as well as on the types of threats/problems you anticipate. A simple way to plan this, and to discuss the rationale for your sequencing, is to draw each vehicle and each 'asset' and on a piece of paper and then assemble a 'paper convoy'.

- Assets are both organic and inorganic: the convoy leader; the deputy leader; a local guide; the commander of the military troops; a long distance radio; short distance handheld radios; medical personnel; mechanics; the water tanker; the recovery truck, etc.
- What type and numbers of vehicles do you have: trucks; buses; 4-wheel drive passenger vehicles; pick-ups; a recovery truck; a water tanker; an ambulance; an armoured personnel carrier, etc?
- What 'assets' do you have and where will you put them: the convoy leader; the deputy leader; a local guide; the commander of the military troops; long distance radio; short distance handheld radios; medical personnel; mechanics; the water tanker; the recovery truck, etc?
- What are the problems you anticipate: a vehicle getting stuck in the mud during a river crossing without a bridge; heavy trucks not able to climb a snowy road to a mountain pass; a road block by irregulars; mines; physical aggression by local people against the returnees from an ethnic minority you are escorting back home, etc?
- In the light of the possible scenarios how will you line up your 'assets'? If you expect manmade problems you may want to have a 'scouting vehicle' ahead of the convoy. This needs to be able to maintain radio contact; it probably should not carry the convoy leader but perhaps the deputy? Will the local guide go with it or stay with the main convoy? The convoy leader will be in front, but the rear of the convoy should

Continued...

also be made up of someone with experience and decision making authority. Can you maintain radio contact between the front and the end of the convoy? If not, is it possible to establish a signal code (with car horns and headlights)?

- Armed escorts should be in separate vehicles. If the armed escorts do not have their own transport, aid agencies may provide a vehicle but all agency identification marks should be removed. Ideally an armed escort should be split over more than one point in the convoy.
- Buses or other vehicles full of passengers should be in the middle, with the medical resources and food, water and blankets among them. You need to add spare vehicles for passengers in case one of the buses breaks down.

Check before departure

Prior to departure the convoy leader must check all vehicles: are they adapted to the expected journey (for example, are trucks of a height and weight so that they can pass all bridges and tunnels); do they all have enough fuel, and spare tyres; are all 4-wheel drive vehicles if these are indispensable to pass difficult terrain; do all have the necessary documentation required to pass official checkpoints, etc? It is very important for the convoy leader to know the details of the cargoes carried, and s/he must have the right to inspect the cargoes of constituent vehicles prior to departure.

Articulate and communicate the convoy rules

- **General movement rules:** these include such things as the speed of the convoy (it will travel at the speed of the slowest vehicle); minimum and maximum distances between the vehicles as a function of safety and security; lights on for easier visual contact; regulations on radio use; agreed stopping and resting points.
- **General scenario rules:** how does the convoy act when approaching a checkpoint; what will the convoy do when one vehicle experiences problems at a checkpoint while the others get clearance; what will the convoy do when a vehicle breaks down but cannot immediately be repaired? (There have been instances of truck-drivers being killed when their vehicle broke down and they stayed behind.)
- **Allocation of authority:** a clear identification of the convoy leader and his/her deputies. Drivers need to be clearly instructed about the convoy rules.

Distance keeping

Distance between convoy vehicles is a difficult issue in practice. Vehicles should never be so far apart that visual contact is lost; at the same time they should not be so close together that they get caught in the same incident (ambush, slipping into each other on an icy road, damage from a mine explosion). What is appropriate varies according to the terrain and the weather and security conditions, and may have to be adjusted several times during the course of one journey.

8.2 Car-jacking and Armed Robbery on the Road

8.2.1 Threat Analysis and Preparedness

Car-jackers will want to steal your vehicle. Armed robbers may only want your valuables, although they could use your car to make good their escape.

Vulnerability and pattern analysis

A good incident pattern analysis (Chapter 4) can identify high-risk zones. It can also suggest high-risk times, for example, that car-jackers seize vehicles when their owners get into them to leave in the morning, or when they return home in the evening. Under such circumstances you should closely watch your surroundings before getting into your car, and perhaps even walk around the block first in the morning, or drive around the block when returning home in the evening, looking for anybody suspicious.

Alternatively car-jackings may occur at a stopping point. In some African cities cars are stolen at a red traffic light. This is complicated, and you could try to reduce the risk by trying never to be the front car waiting at the red light. It is more common for car-jackers and sometimes armed robbers to follow you for a while in another car and then suddenly overtake you and force you to stop.

Another possibility is that your regular route is known and the attack has been planned, in which case the attackers may be waiting for you and suddenly block your route by parking their vehicle in front of yours. Another technique is for the robbers to deliberately fake an accident by bumping into your vehicle to make you stop and get out of your car. If you know this has happened before then do not stop immediately but signal to the other car to follow you and try to reach a well-lit area with more people around. Constantly monitor whether another vehicle is following you, and test this by changing speed and turning into side streets.

Door locks and seatbelts

Whether drivers lock the car doors when driving or not is again a contextual decision. When thieves operate generally without weapons (eg, snatching a bag from the passenger seat while you are waiting at a traffic light) or with knives, this offers protection and gains you seconds in which to accelerate out of danger. However, when an incident pattern analysis reveals that armed robbers are likely to shoot when they encounter any obstacle that frustrates their attempt it may be safer not to lock the doors and perhaps not even to wear your seatbelt.

8.2.2 When an Incident Happens

Trying to escape

Specialised security training teaches drivers how to throw their vehicle into rapid reverse, to hit a vehicle trying to push them off the road or to 'crash' through the roadblock of another vehicle. You may want to try this if you consider yourself an expert, but this is not advisable. You are likely to provoke gunfire or even kill yourself in a car crash.

Whether you should try and reverse or accelerate to escape an imminent ambush is a judgement call. Always assume, however, that the attackers are armed and that shots will follow if you try to escape. Of course, if your threat analysis has indicated that people are often shot and killed in the course of a car-jacking you may decide to try evasive action.

Types of attackers

Bear in mind that the armed robbers may be of two types: inexperienced opportunistic robbers, often adolescents, or experienced robbers.

- The experienced robber is likely to practise techniques of intimidation and submission: he/she may force you to face the car, or go down on your knees, hands behind your neck, pistol against your head. You may be hit hard on the head or neck to signal that you should not try to resist; what you do not know is how likely they are to pull the trigger if they perceive you are resisting.
- Experienced robbers may also practice ambush techniques: they will block you in front and behind to prevent you escaping. Your attempt to reverse or accelerate out of an ambush can have been anticipated and will be met with gunshots.
- The inexperienced robber is even more dangerous: he/she may be far more nervous, pepped up with drugs or alcohol, not in control of his/her own weapon or of themselves; a weapon can go off very easily and almost unintentionally.

In general any robber will be watchful for anything that signals resistance on your part, and nervous about delays. Remember:

- no vehicle or amount of money is worth your life;
- never put your life at risk by resisting an armed robbery;
- keep your hands visible, make no sudden moves;
- avoid displays of anger, rudeness or aggressiveness;
- give up the vehicle and/or valuables as instructed.

This latter point is to be taken fairly literally: comply swiftly with the attackers' orders but do not initiate any action such as getting out of the car or handing over wallet or car keys, unless 'instructed' (verbally or with hand signals).

Danger moments

Getting out of a car is a dangerous moment. The attackers may suspect that you too carry a weapon or will try some manoeuvre; their finger will be on the trigger. Never spontaneously grab for the door handle, release the seat belt or touch the hand brake without alerting the attackers to what you are doing: they may think you are grabbing a weapon. Keep your hands visible, and say or signal what you must do/intend to do before making any movement. Leave the car door open when you are out of it. Surrender personal items on demand. Don't show fear or anger.

Negotiating

There may be circumstances when you could try to negotiate – for instance, so that you can keep your passport and/or the radio, so that you are allowed to first make a distress call, or so that you keep a supply of water and food (when ambushed in a remote area and a long walk from a help point). This again is a situational judgement: in general, avoid negotiating when the attackers are very nervous, visibly anxious to get away as quickly as possible and/or highly aggressive.

8.3 Preparation and Training

For drivers and field staff

- map reading and use of compass;
- testing and training for mastering the vehicle, terrain and traffic;
- a 'get yourself home' basic car repair;
- instructions on driving discipline and convoy discipline;
- key messages about the agency and its mission in your context;
- simulation: under aerial attack; in a mined area; armed robbery on the road; checkpoint passage; journey planning; venturing into unknown territory.

For logistics managers

- knowledge of advanced vehicle repair;
- driver training skill or clear criteria to identify a good driver-trainer;
- competence in installation and use of protective devices;
- management of vehicle pool and maintenance and repair scheduling;
- simulations on journey planning;
- simulations on convoy constitution;
- security management.

For field managers

- policy on driver recruitment criteria;
- driver policy and disciplinary policy (who is allowed to drive what and when);
- passenger and accident policy (procedures/guidelines);
- simulations on convoy constitution.

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