

**Strengthening UN Secretariat Capacity for
Civilian Post-Conflict Response**

by

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Five departments of the United Nations Secretariat have direct responsibilities related to recruitment, deployment, or support of civilian engagement in crisis management or post-conflict operations: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the Department of Political Affairs (DPA); the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); the Department of Management (DM); and the Department of Communications and Public Information (DPI). In this paper, I examine the capacities of these offices to anticipate, plan, and support crisis management and civilian components of post-conflict peacekeeping, reconstruction, and peacebuilding. I also review how they are structured to interact with each other and the rest of the UN system and sketch some of their links with people and organizations outside the UN system. The Conclusions and Recommendations section lays out options for strengthening Secretariat capabilities in these areas.

OCHA: HUMANITARIAN CRISIS RESPONSE

OCHA has 254 headquarters personnel, over three quarters of whom are funded by voluntary contributions, in New York and Geneva. OCHA New York relates to the political departments and the New York intergovernmental bodies on behalf of the UN's humanitarian agencies. The New York office deals directly with the field only at the level of Humanitarian Coordinator. Headquarters-level coordination also includes chairing the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), whose members include UN agencies, funds, and programs, plus non-UN entities such as the North American NGO consortium InterAction and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which are IASC "standing invitees."¹ The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Under-Secretary-General (USG) Jan Egeland, who was appointed in September 2003, chairs the IASC. It meets at the head-of-agency level twice yearly and quarterly at the "directors of emergencies" level and has twelve thematic working groups that meet as necessary. There are weekly meetings in New York and Geneva to brief NGO members but IASC has no formal links to national aid agencies, which are viewed for the most part as "donors" rather than "practitioners." IASC approves common guidelines for the Consolidated Appeal Process; for the use of military and civil defense assets in support of UN humanitarian operations in complex emergencies; on contingency planning; and on other operational issues. The IASC periodically issues policy advocacy "statements," such as the 2003 "Call for a Freeze on the Use of Cluster Munitions."²

OCHA also chairs the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and hosts the one-person ECHA secretariat. The group addresses broad policy issues (as, protection of civilians) and holds monthly teleconferences at the agency executive director/under-secretary-general level to coordinate on key issues, such as the selection of deputy heads of new peace operations.

¹ Other UN members of the IASC are UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, WFP, UNFPA, and UNHCR. The "standing invitees" are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Organization for Migration, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (comprising the 'top ten aid groups'), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA, representing primarily European NGOs), InterAction (representing North American NGOs), the Office of the SRSG on Internally Displaced Persons, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the World Bank. From www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/membership.asp and interviews, United Nations, April 20, 2004.

² Ibid, except that IASC statements are available only in hardcopy from the IASC Secretariat.

OCHA's 438 field staff members, financed by voluntary contributions, are deployed in roughly two dozen country and regional offices.³ OCHA makes provision for voluntary deployments of Headquarters staff to assist UN Country Teams (UNCTs) for a maximum six weeks. Its Field Coordination Support Services project, based in Geneva, also arranges memoranda of understanding for secondment of staff from governments (which the UN classifies as 'type II gratis personnel'). Forty-three such persons were seconded to UN field positions in 2003.⁴

OCHA makes substantial use of information technology (IT) to inform and to coordinate: ReliefWeb posts daily news feeds from countries experiencing humanitarian emergencies, as well as field job vacancies in humanitarian organizations. Its usage rates have climbed steadily over the past four years (see figure one, below): On an average weekday, 30,000 users download 160,000 documents from the site, and in the first quarter of 2004, nearly 57,000 subscribers received field vacancy announcements by email. (The number of vacancies posted has been climbing by about 1,000 per quarter for the past six quarters, and the number of organizations advertising vacancies has more than doubled over the same period, to roughly 700.)

ReliefWeb's Map Center holds about 3,000 items and adds about 200 more per quarter. (The Map Center is responsible for about a third of ReliefWeb's 20 million "hits" per month.) The Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Center, accessible by password from ReliefWeb, gives far-flung emergency relief providers a single information nexus through which to propose plans, find or share resources, or coordinate approaches to a crisis or disaster.

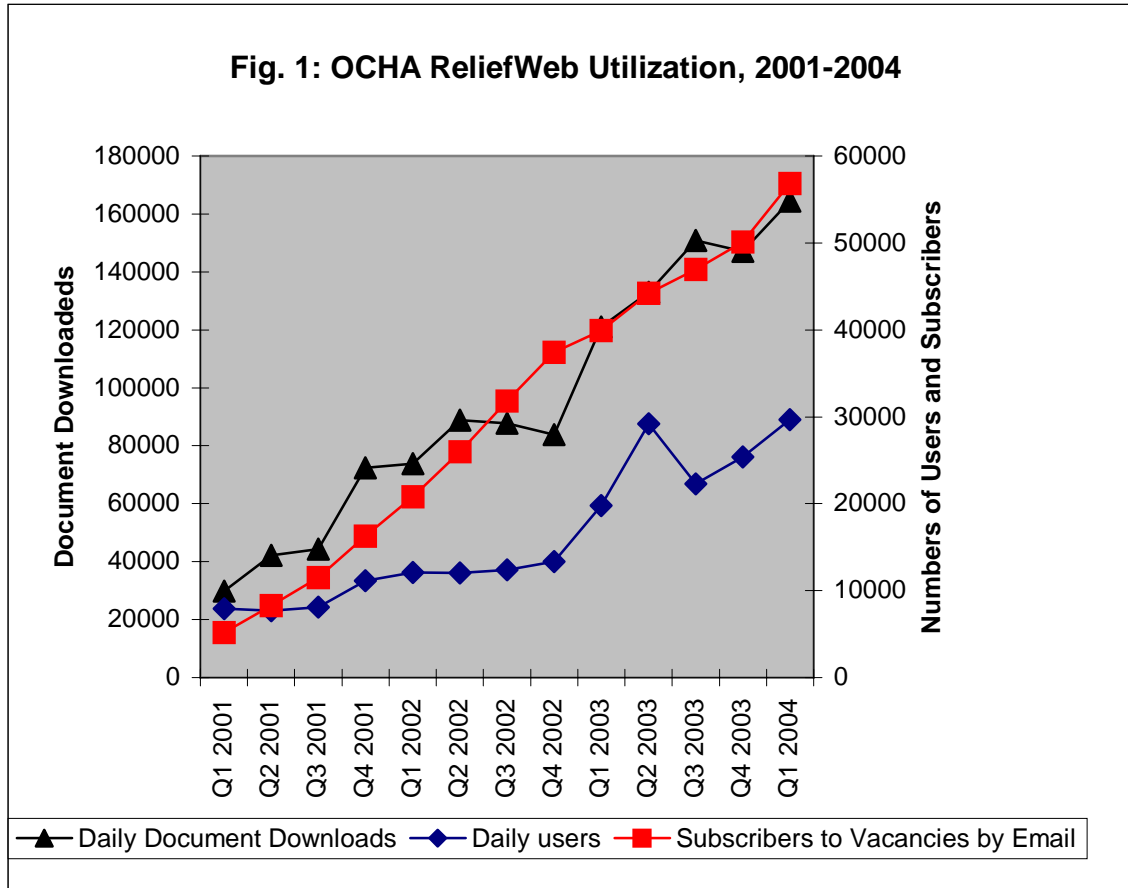
The Field Information Unit supports the creation of Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs), which function as a source of consolidated information about "who's doing what, where" for UN, governmental and non-governmental aid providers alike, with emphasis on Geographic Information Systems and data-enhanced mapping. Initially developed to coordinate NGO activities in Kosovo, the concept was applied again in Afghanistan. To date, OCHA has also supported the creation of humanitarian information centers for Sierra Leone, Iraq, Liberia, and the occupied Palestinian territories. Response times currently range from one to three weeks, with a planning goal of 72 hours. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the US Agency has provided seed money for information center development and the UK Department for International Development has provided equipment.⁵ The IASC endorsed the HIC concept as a UN common service under OCHA management in February 2003.

Traditionally, bureaucracies have maintained and enhanced their power by hoarding information and employing it selectively, on the assumption that knowledge is power and that power shared is power dissipated. The ReliefWeb and HIC approach confirms that knowledge is power but also that well-coordinated management and sharing of knowledge leads to a net increase in power to cope with common problems among all those connected to the knowledge-sharing net: the utility of data for purposes of problem-solving is *increased* to the extent that it is shared. In such an environment of shared situational awareness, the power and prestige of participating organizations derive from the *skills and resources* they can bring to bear on the problem, in the context of an efficient division of labor for applying those skills and resources.

³ "About OCHA: Basic Facts," ochaonline.un.org.

⁴ UN OCHA, "An Overview of OCHA's Emergency Services," p. 30.

⁵ UN OCHA, "An Overview of OCHA's Emergency Services" (New York: United Nations, 2004), p. 20.



Some information (for example, about anticipated security threats or plans to deal with them) still must be shared selectively. It is this realm—the collection, sharing, and use of security-related intelligence—that remains the greatest source of neuralgia between the humanitarian community and those who provide security for a living—military forces, police, and the offices of the UN Security Coordinator. Security-related management issues are also fundamental to the relationship between Security Council-mandated peace operations and the UN humanitarian community. OCHA straddles the divide between the two.

OCHA often has personnel in or near conflict zones, coordinating UN humanitarian response where field access and security conditions allow the delivery of emergency assistance. Its personnel, as part of such pre-existing UNCTs, often remain in place after a complex peacekeeping operation deploys to implement a peace accord. Issues for OCHA in such circumstances revolve around UN mission “integration” and the degree to which the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), who leads the peace operation, envelops and supercedes the authority of the UNCT and its Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC); and the extent to which the political mandate of the peace operation affects adversely the carefully-cultivated neutrality of humanitarian aid providers.

Under USG Egeland, OCHA has moved to revisit the issue of the SRSG’s overarching authority in the field, established in the Secretary-General’s reform proposals of 1997 and reaffirmed in mid-2000. Greatly increased sensitivity to (and liability for) staff security have further

reinforced Headquarters' tendency to want to place all UN personnel in a country under common security decision-making. Humanitarian agencies tend to chafe at strictures employed by the office of the UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), arguing that they have managed to set up workable security precautions and procedures in unstable conflict zones such as Sudan for years, even decades, without supervision from a central security manager and his or her minions. But the bombing in Iraq (universally referred to in the UN as "8/19") has induced extra caution and an expansion of the UN Security Service trained for close protection of VIPs in the field.

Where peace operations have been generated by humanitarian emergencies, as in Liberia, the tensions between the humanitarian imperative and the security imperative have become acute. Outside Monrovia, the country was declared a "Phase V" security zone and UN personnel were withdrawn to the capital.⁶ Once UNMIL was mandated and the SRSG assumed his post, UN humanitarian redeployment was tied to the deployment of UNMIL peacekeeping contingents, which did not begin to deploy outside Monrovia until the end of December, leaving UN humanitarian agencies bottled up for three months while the ICRC and NGO aid providers resumed aid distribution. The situation eased by March, with full deployment of peacekeepers, but had Liberia's population been wholly dependent on UN aid providers during that five months period, it would have either starved to death or converged on Monrovia.

In Liberia, humanitarian agencies appear to have been further put off by the SRSG's delegation of his authority as "Designated Official for Security" (or DO) to the Deputy SRSG for Operations and Rule of Law, one of two DSRSGs in UNMIL. On its face, this was a logical choice. The Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Coordination, Rehabilitation, Recovery and Reconstruction, on the other hand, was the official with direct ties to the UN humanitarian community arrayed just outside UNMIL's organizational boundaries. Had he been appointed DO, his decisions might have been more acceptable to that community even had his decisions been no different from those actually issued. How such an appointment might have played in the rest of UNMIL is unclear.

The access issue is linked to the UN humanitarian community's concerns about "integrated missions." DPKO much prefers that the UN presence in countries where there is a Security Council peacekeeping mandate and mission be unified under the authority of the SRSG, with each member agency focused on the political priority of rebuilding the post-war state. Humanitarian agencies bridle at being urged to support a political objective. To the humanitarian ear, "political" equals "partisan," equals "biased," equals "danger" and diminished future credibility. The humanitarians have reason to worry about such things because they operate far more often without military protection than with it, need their reputation for neutrality to be intact for the next crisis, and know that modern communications will telegraph any deviations to the next conflict zone. But DPKO argues that, without a stable and responsive state, humanitarian assistance cannot be effective and is likely to be needed for a much longer period. Thus, once the UN has been tasked to help create a stable state, all components of the system should pitch in to support that objective or at least not work visibly at cross-purposes. From this perspective, studied neutrality is a mistake during peace implementation, reflecting a kind of take it or leave it attitude toward the agreement being implemented that could send the wrong signal to the local

⁶ The five UN security phases are: I – precautionary; II – restricted movement; III – relocation; IV – program suspension; V – evacuation. For a description of the UN Security Management System and discussion of the five phases, see *Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq*, 20 October 2003. Online at: <http://www.hicirag.org/download/Ahtisaari%20report.doc>.

parties about the relative costs of spoiler behavior.

There is, moreover, something of a Catch 22 in arguments to the effect that OCHA would prefer to remain aloof from operations where the local government is shakiest, in order to preserve its ability to move around that government if need be, and avoid close association of its programs with an institution that might fail. By remaining aloof from a new regime, it may undermine—or at the very least not promote—public confidence in the government, thereby potentially hastening that failure.

What DPKO sees as coordination, however, humanitarians see as an effort at co-optation or control, with the SRSG in charge of all in-country UN personnel. DPKO officials insist that they are not looking to order the humanitarian agencies around but just want to avoid contradictory actions in the field and to promote a common orientation of UN field activities. OCHA planners in turn express preference for “coherence,” a situation in which political and humanitarian elements of the UN can support a common strategy and help to legitimate local government institutions but not do so in formal subordination to the authority of the SRSG in all matters humanitarian. The preferred model seems to be to leave the Country Team, or most of it, outside the fence of a peace operation, represented inside by the Humanitarian or Resident Coordinator. DPKO officials suggest that such separation would be fine for “lifesaving emergency aid” but argue that OCHA’s definition of such aid “keeps changing.” For its part, OCHA would like to sit down with DPKO and work out an agreed framework for political-humanitarian coordination in the field that parallels civil-military and give OCHA a consistent channel of influence in the structuring of the humanitarian components of complex operations.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS

DPA was assembled in the early 1990s from a congeries of small, special interest offices and units, the politics of its creation being reflected in the designation of not one but two USGs to head it. Virtually all of DPA’s funding, including the operational funds for its field offices (discussed below), comes from the regular UN budget. The department provides administrative and archival support to the Security Council and supports the Secretary-General’s various peacemaking initiatives. DPA’s regional divisions support the Secretary-General’s “good offices” function and the envoys who undertake good offices missions. The department is also the Secretariat’s designated “focal point” for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Some argue that these three roles are sufficiently different as to generate cognitive dissonance within DPA: support for good offices is relatively reactive and tactical; the Department does not go out looking for candidate diplomatic missions and supports them without necessarily linking them into a larger, purposive peacemaking effort. Conflict prevention, on the other hand, would suggest a strategic outlook and a pro-active search for countries and situations at risk of deterioration into violence. OCHA has an early warning unit and has worked on conflict early warning indicators,⁷ but DPA has no such unit.

Peacebuilding can be both operational and strategic—operational in that peace is built one country at a time (with requisite attention to conditions in its immediate region) and strategic to

⁷ See, for example, John N. Clarke, “Early Warning Analysis for Humanitarian Preparedness and Conflict Prevention,” *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, online at www.jha.ac/articles/a146.pdf, posted 24 January 2004. Clarke presents a detailed matrix for evaluation of conditions within a state and its surrounding region. An advisor with the OCHA Early Warning and Contingency Planning Unit in New York, in this article he is writing in his private capacity.

the extent that lessons from multiple cases might be compiled over time to yield insights into how to improve peacebuilding as a process. That would be easier if there were wide acceptance of a common definition of peacebuilding but there is not. The Brahimi Report, for example, defined peacebuilding as those efforts to rebuild the foundations of peace in a war-torn country, so as to differentiate it from conflict prevention.⁸ The cyclical nature of conflict in some places, however, makes even these definitions bleed into each other over time.

For the past several years, DPA has managed and supported a number of “political” or peacebuilding offices in post-conflict countries, most but not all set up after peacekeeping operations

Table 1: UN Special Political Missions

Includes selected peace-building or assistance missions, political offices or special representatives of the S-G, monitoring mechanisms or committees

General Assembly-mandated Missions	
Central American Peace Process	
United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala	
Special Envoy to Myanmar	
Security Council-mandated Missions	
United Nations Office in Somalia	Panel of Experts on Liberia
Panel of Experts on Somalia	United Nations Office in Burundi
Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373	Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Dem. Rep. of Congo
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Africa	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic
United Nations Office in West Africa	United Nations Political Office in Bougainville
United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus	Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon
Office of the Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region	United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding
Monitoring Mechanism on Sanctions against UNITA	Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Special Assignments in Africa
Monitoring Group on Afghanistan	

Source: UN GA, Estimates in respect of matters of which the Security Council is seized, 18th report of the [ACABQ], A/57/7/add.17, 27 November 2002, Annex I. Adapted from William J. Durch, Victoria K. Holt, et al., The Brahimi Report and the Future of Peace Operations (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, December 2003), ch. 2.

completed their work, to offer continuing support to the local peace process. (See table one.) However, the advisory mission in Guatemala, MINUGUA, and the mission to conduct the 1999 “consultation” in East Timor, UNAMET, were not preceded by peacekeeping operations.

There are differing views within DPA as to whether the department should be at all “operational” in this fashion, with some seeing at least the smaller offices not as reflecting departmental strategy but as a kind of substitute for strategy. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the various

⁸ UN, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305, 21 August 2000, paras. XX.10, 13.

political offices would probably be advisable.

In the fall of 2002, DPA took a step away from an operational role when it reached agreement with DPKO to more sharply differentiate their roles, the blurring of which had been a cause of concern to member states for some years. Under the 2002 arrangement, DPA agreed to relinquish management of complex peacebuilding operations—multifunctional but without military forces—and DPKO agreed to dial down its political role and to focus on running operations. The relative “complexity” of a mission and thus which department manages it is to be defined case by case by the two departments’ USGs.⁹ Interviews indicate that this agreement is largely being implemented.

If DPA appears uncertain about whether to maintain its operational role, it is equally ambivalent about whether or how to reposition or reinvent itself to be more of a “strategic thinker” or knowledge broker for the peace and security elements of the Secretariat. As on study of DPA noted, the department

is the closest analog within the United Nations to a foreign affairs ministry. However, the UN lacks embassies to generate political reporting from the field, although DPA does have reporting from special political missions. DPA desk officers have too few opportunities for familiarization visits to their countries of responsibility or to serve in the field (although some have prior experience in peace operations). DPA lacks a research department and some states are, in any case, “suspicious of UN staff seeking certain types of information.”¹⁰

DPA analysts do not routinely search out and highlight looming crises for senior management and do not see demand for such product. It is, perhaps, a function better delegated to a unit within the department that has this specific responsibility. For such a unit to be both compact and effective would require the ability to tap a wider—indeed, global—expert community. The department has reached out with some success to entities within the New York area—the Conflict Prevention and Peace forum at the Social Science Research Council, which does country-focused research; the International Peace Academy, whose research tends to be more thematic and peace operations-focused; and the Center on International Cooperation at New York University, which has researched post-conflict reconstruction funding and is completing a study of potential “missed opportunities” for conflict prevention. A wider and more systematic relationship with academic and think tank experts in various regions is needed to enable DPA to develop greater depth and foresight on regional situations. Such outreach could be usefully coupled with an assessment methodology similar to that developed by OCHA.

DPA’s Electoral Assistance Division is the most operational element of the department, and its head reports directly to the Under-Secretary-General. EAD provides technical advice to member states and electoral set up and supervision when asked. For at least the past five years, it has enjoyed dynamic leadership and has been much in demand. Most of its operational funding comes from voluntary contributions and the great majority of those are earmarked for particular

⁹ William J. Durch, Victoria K. Holt, et al., *The Brahimi Report and the Future of Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, December 2003), p. 59.

¹⁰ Ibid., drawing on Elizabeth Sellwood, “Informing the United Nations: The practice of analysis in the Department of Political Affairs,” 16 December 2002, 12-14, 18. Mimeo. Sellwood conducted interviews in DPA in August and September 2002.

applications. As a result, it must decline several requests for assistance each year. Should the UN be invited to set up elections in Iraq, EAD would very likely be the office responsible for their conduct.

With major questions outstanding with regard to the Department's strategic direction, DPA stands at something of a crossroads. Four or five years ago, there was sentiment in some quarters for merging the department with DPKO and, as the High Level Panel reviews Secretariat organization, that question may arise once again. I address it, along with some of the complexities it would entail, in the recommendations section, below.

DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

DPKO plans and implements both traditional border-monitoring peacekeeping operations and complex peace operations. The latter have entailed substantial civilian components as well as military forces. Under the 2002 arrangement with DPA, DPKO has responsibility for complex operations even if they do not include military units, an example being the current UN operation in Afghanistan.

DPKO has benefited the most from the reforms and restructuring triggered by the Brahimi Report. It has expanded by 50 percent to about 675 posts. Of these, 595 (88%) are funded by the annual Peacekeeping Support Account, 56 are funded by the regular UN budget, and the rest, in the Mine Action Service, are funded by voluntary contributions.

DPKO faces unprecedented operational demands that threaten to overwhelm even the larger post-Brahimi department. Up to six new operations may go forward in 2004 (as of this writing, three have been mandated, for Haiti, Ivory Coast, and Burundi). As of spring 2004, field-to-headquarters personnel ratios are about 25 percent better than they were in July 2000 (92:1 now versus 114:1 then) but the coming operational surge will more than eat up that gain. If, as predicted, another 20-25,000 troops, 2,500 police, and 2,100 international civilians are needed in UN operations by the end of calendar 2004, total personnel in the field will be 80-85,000 and the field-headquarters ratio will be more like 150:1.¹¹

DPKO is seeking immediate respite by reassigning twenty vacant field slots to Headquarters temporarily. These new hires will be used to relieve more experienced hands of more routine administrative chores. Since Headquarters hiring has been very slow (averaging nine months from initial advertisement to body-at-desk), DPKO will need all the lead time it can get in filling these positions.

It is not that applicants per se are difficult to find. DPKO indicates that, for every field job vacancy advertised on-line via the "Galaxy" system, it receives about 1,500 applications. Of that number, perhaps 50 are sufficiently well qualified to be considered for positions. But other organizations are competing for many of the same bodies (recall the field vacancy listings on ReliefWeb). The UN's competitors are not just non-profit NGOs but also companies working for the likes of the US Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq—although in the last few months

¹¹ Growth projections based on interviews, United Nations, April 5, 19, and 20, 2004. Interviews projected an increase of 65 percent in civilian mission staff. None of the calculations include local ("national") staff, who are directly recruited and managed by the missions, which presents less of a burden to DPKO. As of March 2004, there were about 6,300 national staff in UN peace operations; another 4,000 may be needed by year's end. For field staffing totals, and breakouts by mission, see UN DPI, "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Background Note, 4 April 2004," at www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml. Click on Overview, Information Note.

even some of the more difficult UN field missions may appear more inviting by comparison.¹² Moreover, DPKO has a particular need for French-speaking personnel, given the number of missions now active in or soon deploying to francophone African countries and to Haiti.

The Liberia mission was the first to substantially exploit the new Strategic Deployment Stocks at the UN Logistics Base, Brindisi, Italy. UNMIL reportedly drew down 25 percent of the equipment stock and DPKO has discovered that the replenishment mechanism, which is supposed to draw money from the UNMIL budget to buy new stocks for Brindisi, is hobbled by the length of time it takes (a) for the General Assembly to approve the mission budget and (b) the additional time it takes for the UN's Controller to allow purchases to be obligated against that budget.¹³ Only when those hurdles have been cleared can purchase orders be cut and the months-long process of generating actual vehicles and other equipment begin. Meanwhile, several other operations, including Ivory Coast and Haiti, have been looking to draw upon Brindisi stocks. With this much simultaneity in mission launch, the third and following mission start-ups must work as though Brindisi did not exist.

Civilian deployments to UNMIL made use of the DPKO "Rapid Deployment Team" concept developed in early 2003 to earmark and pre-clear Headquarters and field staff for temporary (90-day) duty setting up new operations. DPKO found, however, that despite these arrangements, managers were frequently reluctant to let their people go. Thirty-two staff from the RDT roster ultimately deployed to UNMIL but the recruitment process was not able to generate their replacements within the 90-day RDT duty timeframe. UNMIL "was reluctant to let RDT staff return to their duty stations" but unless returns are enforced, no manager will part with staff the next time the call comes through requesting RDT personnel.

As RDT staff did return home, UNMIL faced vacancies in just those key areas that the RDT was designed to fill, including "DDRR, political affairs, human rights, legal affairs, and judicial affairs." As of 1 March 2004, five months into the mission, only 24 percent of substantive civilian posts in UNMIL and 42 percent of support posts were really staffed (roughly another 20 percent of the posts in both categories had candidates somewhere in the personnel pipeline).¹⁴ That pipeline for civilian field personnel increasingly involves a collaborative process whereby the Headquarters Personnel Management and Support Service (PMSS) screens candidates and rosters of qualified applicants to the field mission for final selection. Only UNMIK and UNMISSET are authorized to hire directly all of their international personnel.¹⁵

The RDT mechanism does not, however, necessarily generate personnel with experience in or knowledge of the country to which they are to deploy. The SRSG's team in Liberia did not have such expertise at its disposal early in the process and as late as January 2004 the operation still had "very few staff with expertise of Liberia or the sub-region."¹⁶ Similar shortfalls reportedly

¹² Interview, United Nations, April 19, 2004. Somewhat weirdly, considering the extent to which it has been touted as a recruiting mechanism for the field, Galaxy showed 146 job openings at Headquarters and in UN offices around the world, but just six vacancies in "peacekeeping and other field mission" when checked May 10, and the log-in screen produced only an error message.

¹³ UN DPKO, Best Practices Unit, "Lessons Learned Study on the Start-Up Phase of the United Nations Mission in Liberia," April 2004. Online at www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons.

¹⁴ "Lessons Learned...Liberia," pp. 9-10.

¹⁵ Interview, United Nations, April 19, 2004.

¹⁶ "Lessons Learned...Liberia," p. 11.

beset the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷

Liberia figures prominently in this discussion because it is the most recent complex operation to deploy and the first to benefit from an in-depth analysis of its start-up phase. Lessons generated by that process and analysis can and should be applied to the succession of missions to be deployed in 2004 but the starkest lesson is that the UN can expect shortfalls and stretch-outs in all of them.

DPKO is getting better at internal collaboration, with an integrated mission planning process chaired by the Office of Operations and involving personnel from the logistics, finance, and personnel divisions. Although there are also “interdepartmental task forces” for new missions, with participation by DPKO, DPA, OCHA, UNHCR and the country assessment team, chaired at the Director level, they do not appear to rise to the level of authority envisaged in the Brahimi Report for an “integrated mission task force.” Moreover, with 25-50 members, such task forces are unwieldy. In general, extra-departmental coordination remains more personality-dependent than routinized and the sort of “lateral” thinking more common to humanitarian response and coordination is not yet embedded in peace operations planning.¹⁸ Most critically, DPKO still lacks a center of responsibility for planning the civilian components of a complex operation. These are the components most responsible for creating sustainable results on the ground, that is, for generating an exit strategy.

DPKO now has some of the tools in place to be better at organizational learning. Its relatively new Best Practices Unit has begun to generate quick-turnaround reports (as, for Liberia) and to build an accessible online resource center.¹⁹ Whether it actually does better at learning depends on how well it picks up on the conclusions and recommendations of such studies and applies them to mission planning and execution.

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

DM has 134 staff funded by the Peacekeeping Support Account.²⁰ DM finalizes all peacekeeping operations budgets and presents them to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ); processes peacekeeping assessments from member states and reimburses troop contributing countries; recruits headquarters personnel for DPKO; provides medical clearances for staff deploying to the field; and procures all goods and services for UN peace operations that aren't purchased through the missions themselves, including all procurement under more than 100 standing “systems contracts” with commercial vendors.²¹

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

When a large peacekeeping operation deploys into a war-torn country, it needs to explain what it's doing there to the local parties and the local population, who may or may not have heard that

¹⁷ Interview, United Nations, April 20, 2004.

¹⁸ For a critique of traditional hierarchies in disaster (and, by extension, post-conflict) response, see Frederick M. Burke, Jr. and Robin Hayden, “The Concept of Assisted Management of Large-Scale Disasters by Horizontal Organizations,” *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, vol. 16, no. 3, July-September 2001, pp. 87-96.

¹⁹ The newly revised Best Practices web page may be found at www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/lessons.

²⁰ UN General Assembly, *Budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005, Report of the Secretary-General*, document A/58/715, 17 February 2004, pp. 4, 89.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 86.

another army was due in town and may not recognize it as friendly. First impressions count, and radio, in particular, can make an effective and valuable first impression for a new operation.

The operation also may have to sell its “products”—from demining and freedom of movement to free and fair elections—in the face of local factions’ oppositional propaganda, including hate radio or television. Even where there are no deliberate attempts to undermine a peace accord, it can be hazardous to open up channels for political speech in violent societies that have not yet worked out the boundaries of acceptable political behavior, including what’s acceptable on the airwaves. In both defining itself and defining what’s acceptable, a new mission may not have that much time; it is important that this capability function well right out of the box, and that it have the appropriate personnel on hand to do the job right.

At the moment, UN capabilities to plan and execute the public information elements of new peace operations are exceedingly limited. DPI has just two staff funded by the Peacekeeping Support Account. In two rounds of implementation of the Brahimi Report’s recommendations, the Secretary-General did not manage to persuade member states that public information was a sufficiently important element of peace operations as to merit a separate planning and support staff at Headquarters. Initial proposals would have moved several posts from DPI into the ‘information and strategic analysis staff’ proposed to be set up within DPA; failing that, follow-on proposals sought to add public information positions to DPKO. At present, one person in the office of the USG in DPKO deals with public information issues. Together with the two staff in DPI, they deal with all PI-related equipment issues, planning, and recruiting for all 15 UN peacekeeping operations. DPI reform measures undertaken in 2002 and 2003 appear to have left the Peace and Security Section essentially unchanged; the department’s budget request documents do not even mention it. Given that the USG for Communications and Public Information is a veteran of DPKO, the evident lack of interest in departmental information support for peace operations is all the more puzzling. Ironically, for an organization that designs and maintains websites for much of the rest of the Secretariat, DPI lacks an integrated web page of its own. An interested outsider cannot tell at a glance what it is this department does.

The consequences of the missed connections between DPI, DPKO, and the public information needs of the field were apparent in the start-up phase of UNMIL. Although a kit of rapidly-deployable broadcast equipment was in Brindisi and dispatched to Monrovia quickly, the dispatch occurred only because a staff member at Brindisi had experience in DPI; “there were no procedures in place to specifically address the transfer of public information equipment to missions.”²² Moreover, although public information personnel were quickly deployed to UNMIL using the RDT mechanism, once there, they found that none had the skills to install or operate the equipment shipped from Brindisi; thus UN radio remained off the air for over a month until the requisite technical support could be had. When the original, RDT-based PI team repatriated after 90 days, their replacements had not yet arrived, leaving UNMIL without essential public information support at about the time when it was trying to launch its ambitious disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation program.²³

²² “Lessons Learned...Liberia,” p. 14.

²³ Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Brahimi Report stressed that the changes it had recommended, while urgently needed, reflected only the minimum change that the UN required to begin to get complex peace operations right. Many of its recommendations have since been implemented and some changes, such as the Brindisi stockpiles, went well beyond what Brahimi recommended. Still, they are proving insufficient in the face of multiple, simultaneous mandates from the Security Council. There are many different areas in which the Secretariat's capacity to plan and execute the civilian elements of post-conflict operations might be improved. The segments that follow single out a few that seem particularly important if operations are to be effective. Some areas, such as training, are not addressed in part because planning to meet UN needs appears well underway.²⁴

The following sections present recommendations, options, and discussion on headquarters organization, interdepartmental coordination, mission design, and personnel issues.

1. Headquarters Institutional Design Issues

The most immediate need is for better civilian mission planning, which will require new people and a new entity, most likely within DPKO and its Office of Operations. (The location is a matter of current debate within the Secretariat.) DPA needs, at a minimum, a serious management review and restructuring. Like DPI, DPA's Web pages suggest inattentiveness to the need to sell itself and its functions to a wider audience; indeed, the site does a better job of promoting a unit within DESA than it does of promoting or explaining DPA. The department's homepage is not even reachable directly from the UN Peace and Security Web page. An easily correctible problem, it has not been corrected for years.

Recommendation 1.1: Establish an operations planning division within the DPKO Office of Operations. It should start with 10-15 full-time people who have planning backgrounds as well as substantive knowledge and experience in a range of peace operations-related issues, e.g., elections, human rights, civil administration, and humanitarian coordination. Its director should be a D2, making them a peer of the division directors in the DPKO Office of Mission Support and of the Military Advisor. The primary duty of the new division would be to translate the field strategies proposed by other departments and specialized agencies into concepts of operations for a new mission and, as needed, to recruit, set up, and support the interdepartmental mission task forces that would turn these concepts into mission plans and staffing charts.

Recc. 1.1, Option A: Hire staff for the planning division directly, as DPKO staff.

Recc. 1.1, Option B: Hire the division director and about one-third of the staff directly but otherwise seek secondments, loans, or long-term visits to DPKO of field-qualified planning personnel from core UN agencies, funds, and programs regularly involved in complex peace operations.

Recommendation 1.2: Reconfigure the Civilian Police Division as the Rule of Law Division (RLD), of which the police would be a major component. Build within the new RLD the skill

²⁴ See, for example, [SG DPKO training strategy report, April 2004].

sets needed to plan and promote not only UN policing contingencies but other mission rule of law elements, plus a service or section focused on local security sector reform and rule of law capacity building.

Recommendation 1.3: Address seriously the shortcomings of DPA, with an outside management review comparable to that conducted in 2001 for DPKO, with a view to increasing the Secretariat's capacity for strategic analysis in support of conflict prevention and effective peacebuilding, and to increasing its support to civilian elements of complex peace operations.

Recc 1.3, Option A: As part of a DPA reform package, institute an early retirement incentive program large enough to cover about one third of DPA personnel, not necessarily to downsize the workforce but to open up posts to individuals with recent and relevant field experience.

Recc 1.3, Option B: Entertain the prospect, as a result of the management review, of merging about two-thirds of DPA into DPKO and renaming the joint entity the "Dept. of Peace and Security." DPA's regional divisions, Electoral Assistance Division, and Policy Analysis Unit would be included in the merger. The new department would backstop all political missions and offices currently backstopped by DPA. One USG post would be eliminated. One ASG post transferred from DPA into DPS would direct a new Office for Security Forces, to which the present Military Division and Civilian Police Division would report. The other transferred ASG post would direct the Office of Conflict Prevention, responsible for strategic warning and analysis, for backstopping envoys of the Secretary-General, and for other preventive measures.

Recc 1.3, Option C: Transfer the present DPA Security Council Affairs Division to the Dept. of General Assembly and Conference Affairs, minus the secretariat of the Counterterrorism Committee. If there is to be a new "DPS," transfer the Counterterrorism Committee to the Office of Conflict Prevention in the new Department; else keep it within DPA.

Recc 1.3, Option D: If there is to be a new department, transfer the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Decolonization Unit to DESA or to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Recommendation 1.4: As it seems clear that the ACABQ will not entertain the development of a significant public information support capacity within DPKO, DPI itself must recognize the clear importance of getting PI right, from the outset, in UN peace operations, and move to address the present planning, training, and support gaps in public information for peace operations. Failing such action, DPKO should develop standing relationships with outside suppliers of the basic equipment and technical skills to support the PI needs of a new mission for at least the first six months. The experience of MONUC and its Radio Okapi organization, established in collaboration with Fondation Hirondelle of Switzerland, may be a useful and efficient model upon which to build.

2. Interdepartmental/Interagency Coordination

DPKO has, not without difficulty, implemented an internal integrated mission planning team for

each new peace operation. The prospective desk officer for that mission from the Office of Operations chairs the team. He or she also serves as DPKO representative to the interdepartmental task force (ITF) for that mission. The ITF is a working level analog to the "integrated mission task force" recommended in the Brahimi Report. The impetus behind the IMTF was the need for integrated mission planning across the departments, agencies, funds, and programs that would be working in an operation's mission area. Attempts to implement the concept have thus far produced mixed results. It seems clear that the planning for missions that will be managed and supported by DPKO needs to be led by DPKO, hence the focus of the following recommendations.

Recommendation 2.1: Continue to develop and refine the DPKO integrated mission planning team concept, with team management assumed by members of the new operations planning division. Extend the concept to interdepartmental/interagency task forces (ITFs) for each new mission. Encourage agencies, funds, and programs to post substantive, field-experienced people in New York to support to these planning efforts. Successive planning efforts must develop the mission concept of operations and, following from that, the organization and staffing of a new mission.

Recc. 2.1, Option A: DPKO operations planning division [recc. 1.1, above], as the ITF manager, should have authority to limit participation by other organizational entities to one representative apiece. Core participants for ITFs should be established in advance at the USG level, in the Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

Recommendation 2.2: ITFs should report through the DPKO (or 'DPS') ASG for Operations to a *mission strategy group* or *senior review group* comprising the heads of DPKO, DPA (if retained), OCHA, and the mission SRSG, when appointed. The group should be chaired by DPA (or 'DPS'). This group would approve the basic concept of operations and mission design for presentation to the Secretary-General and Security Council, and also function as the "appeals board" for issues unresolved by the ITF process. When considering appeals, the review group should include the USG/executive director of the organizational entity or entities whose work would be directly affected by the group's decision.

3. Mission design

The structure of a mission derives from what it is supposed to accomplish (its mandate) and who designs it. The push for integrated peace operations (in which peacekeepers, police, and civilian—including humanitarian—components are under the control of the SRSG) troubles the humanitarian community. The evolving proconsular role of the SRSG poses problems not just for humanitarians but also for mission planning and headquarters strategic guidance. Deputy SRSGs have proven to be necessary appointments in complex peace operations; often there are two deputies. Both deputies should be selected when the SRSG is selected.

Recommendation 3.1: Consistently appoint the host country RC/HC as mission Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Assistance and Reconstruction (HAR), establish an agreed definition as to the respective functions of the peace operation and the UN humanitarian assistance community within the mission area, and establish communications interoperability. Adapt the participation of the humanitarian community in the operation to the specific circumstances on the ground,

with as loose an arrangement—ranging from full integration to "collaborative disaggregation"—as is consistent with the political objective of the peace accord that the operation has deployed to implement.

Recc. 3.1, Option A: The SRSG would delegate to the DSRSG/HAR authority for all UN security coordination and security phase-setting in the host country.

Recc. 3.1, Option B: The humanitarian elements of the UN system operating within the peace operation's mission area would remain outside the authority of the SRSG but, coordinating their programming via the DSRSG/HAR, would establish close liaison and cross-support arrangements between their respective in-country logistical elements.

Recommendation 3.2: The DSRSG for mission management or operations should initially head the interdepartmental task force planning the new operation and thus should be appointed at the earliest possible opportunity. Once the mission deploys, s/he should be replaced at Headquarters by the head of the DPKO operational planning division [recc. 1.1].

4. Personnel

The UN is moving in the direction of electronic rosters, recruitment, personnel evaluation, and other management e-functions. For purposes of peace operations, the next logical step may be the selective outsourcing of civilian field recruitment and roster maintenance.

Recommendation 4.1: Accelerate the upgrading of the Galaxy system to promote more effective and refined filtering of electronic job applications by type and level of field experience, among other variables; greater ease in downselecting to a qualified pool of candidates; and more rapid final choice of recruits, initially by Headquarters and, as they become established, by the missions themselves.

Recc. 4.1, Option A: Outsource recruiting of civilian field staff to the private sector. The contractor should be directed to lease or buy the rights to use the software system employed by CANADEM or an equivalent online recruiting system, bypassing the lengthy internal approval and implementation process that governs UN system software adoption and upgrading, and greatly expanding the effective number of personnel officers dealing with recruitment.

Recommendation 4.2: Revisit the Rapid Deployment Team concept, providing greater incentives to staff to volunteer for field deployments and greater incentives to managers to part with their best people for 6-12 months. (This is a continuing dilemma for the UN system that will worsen as the system becomes "leaner" under pressure to cut costs. It will only be resolved if and as the average quality of UN staff goes up.)

Recommendation 4.3: Establish and continually expand a roster of regional and country-level expertise in universities and think tanks around the globe, with a system of retainers, as needed, to access expertise in support of conceptual-level mission planning.