Those working for NGOs have traditionally enjoyed both international legal protection and immunity from attack by belligerent parties. Attacks on humanitarian workers have become more frequent since the 1990s, however. This is attributed to a number of factors, including the increasing number of humanitarian workers deployed, better data collection, the increasingly unstable environments in which they work, and the erosion of the perception of neutrality and independence.

NGOs have to define what they mean by impartiality or even neutrality. It is difficult to reconcile being impartial and especially neutral if the organization supports democracy, social justice and civil society development, or peace-building initiatives in a country that is at war. It is particularly difficult if an organization provides aid but also documents abuses or advocates for human rights. This gives a perception, even if one hires or works with local partners, of not being impartial or neutral. Furthermore, it is also difficult to claim impartiality if it is obvious that aid is not allocated strictly on the basis of need but is instead driven by considerations of access, visibility, cost-effectiveness, agency interests, or expertise.

What NGOs have been advised is to consider the following transparent position:

- Assistance is provided in response to unmet needs, but is also shaped by mandate, mission, expertise, capacity, and agreed policies, as well as by the access and acceptance obtained.
- Assistance is provided to all noncombatants regardless of identity, age, gender, political affiliation, religious conviction, and so on.
- The NGO states openly and otherwise makes clear that it values the basic rights and freedoms of all individuals, political democracy, and nonviolent ways of resolving conflict.

Executive Summary

- NGOs have developed security plans and manuals and have security officers.
- Security for the NGO requires a perceived impartiality.
- The legal basis for protection of humanitarian workers in conflicts is contained in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the related protocol of 1977.
- Because NGO personnel do not enjoy the same protected status provided to U.S. government personnel, they must approach safety and security differently.
- NGO personnel are extremely sensitive in being seen as instruments of government foreign policy, even when they might share the same nationality or even mission as the military force.

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• The NGO practices neutrality as an operational principle:
  • It will not take sides and work in the areas of all groups.
  • It will not comment on the reasons for taking up arms.
  • It may have an opinion about how the conflict can best be resolved (even if it chooses not to express it).
  • It will take a position on the treatment of civilians and noncombatants and the tactics of war, and will express that position.

Since 1994, 594 deaths of occurred among aid workers; only 10 percent of these were accidental; the rest were targeted.180 Of the 594, the vast majority (73 percent) were among local staff working for NGOs.

And although no evidence-based statistics support or refute the notion that cooperation, coordination, or association with the military is detrimental to the safety of an NGO, humanitarian aid worker deaths and kidnappings have gone up sharply with military involvement in FHA since 2001.181

### Legal Basis for Protection

The legal basis for protection of humanitarian workers in conflicts is contained in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the related protocol of 1977.182 These treaties describe the category of civilian noncombatants (which includes local citizens and nationals of countries not party to the conflict) and outline the rights and obligations of noncombatants during conflict. These include the right to be treated humanely; to have access to food, water, shelter, medical treatment, and communications; to be free from violence to life and person, hostage taking, and humiliating or degrading treatment; and a prohibition against collective punishment or imprisonment.

International humanitarian law provides protection for relief actions, in that parties to a conflict shall allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments, equipment and personnel (Additional Protocol I Article 70(2)). Governments or occupying forces may, if they wish, ban a relief agency from working in their area, as long as the ban is not arbitrary. In addition, international humanitarian law does require parties to a conflict to respect and protect personnel participating in relief actions (AP I, Art. 71(2)). The Geneva Conventions also do prohibit combatants from attacking noncombatants, and do require occupying forces to maintain general order.

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182 ICRC, “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977,” [www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fcd125641e0052b079](http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/f6c8b9fee14a77fcd125641e0052b079) (accessed June 12, 2009).
Security Environments

When thinking about safety and security, the military divides operating environments into

- permissive environments, in which host country military and law enforcement agencies have control as well as the intent and capability to assist operations that a unit intends to conduct;
- uncertain environments, in which host government forces, whether opposed to or receptive to operations a unit intends to conduct, do not have effective control of the territory and population in the intended operational area; and
- hostile environments, in which hostile forces have control as well as the intent and capability to effectively oppose or react to the operations a unit intends to conduct.  

These distinctions are based on agreements between the United States and the host nation and help determine the force protection posture individual units take. A status-of-forces agreement (SOFA), which provides additional legal protection to service members, will usually be in place for permissive environments, whereas rules of engagement will delineate appropriate responses for uncertain and hostile environments.

Humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) differ from military forces in that they do not rely on national authorization to enter another country. Instead, they act on several beliefs:

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.  

To protect these values, NGO personnel respond to those in need anywhere in the world “without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” Because NGO personnel do not enjoy the same protected status provided to U.S. government personnel, they must approach safety and security differently.

In general, safety and security risks can be divided into environmental and human threats. Environmental threats include factors like weather, geographic hazards, wildlife threats, and prevalence of disease and affect everyone who operates in the region. Environmental risks can usually be reduced by staying healthy (getting proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise) and by avoiding

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185 Ibid.
or managing obvious risks (wearing sunscreen and insect repellent or avoiding intoxicants and excessive speed while driving).

Human threats can be more challenging and may vary from common theft in peacetime environments to targeted assassination during times of war. In general, the three strategies for protecting personnel against human threats are risk avoidance, risk management, and risk reduction.

Risk avoidance removes personnel from the source of danger. This is a common strategy for regional security officers at U.S. Embassies who ban travel to or recall staff from unstable areas. According to this strategy, activities and movement are increased or reduced according to perceived local support or threats. This strategy is focused on the who, the what, and the where of the threat, and thus relies on a strong and responsive surveillance capability.

**Risk Management**

Risk management focuses on defeating the impact of potential threats or eliminating them altogether. This is a more common strategy for military planners who provide armor for vehicles and individuals as well as weapons to destroy potential attackers. Because conflict is usually taken as a given, operations will change their offensive and defensive posture rather than location or substance of their activities. A risk management strategy focuses more on the what and the how of the threat.

Risk reduction focuses on transforming a potential assailant’s perception of an individual or organization from meddling outsider to “one of us.” In this strategy, the security of personnel is best ensured when the aid workers are integrated into the local community and valued for their contributions to local development. Interpersonal relationships with local authorities, partners, communities, and families become fundamental to accomplishing the NGO’s humanitarian missions. This strategy focuses on neutralizing the why of the threat and often allows NGOs to work in areas that military planners would consider uncertain or hostile.

Of course, no single approach will work for all situations, and humanitarian personnel rely on a combination of strategies to safely conduct their operations. To manage the threats and challenges, NGOs are encouraged to assess their readiness to deploy to or remain in an unstable environment with questions such as these that follow:

- Do you have an adequate understanding of the context in which you operate?
- Do you have a clear sense of your mission and of the position you want to adopt and the role you want to play in your environment?
- Is your plan based on a systematic threat and risk assessment, and do you regularly review this assessment?
- Is it supported by clear policies that spell out responsibilities of the agency and of individual staff?
- Do you consider program choices and implementation approaches from a security point of view?
• Do staff understand the rational behind your standard operating procedures?
• Are staff disciplined about the observance of these procedures?
• Have your staff been given guidance and preparedness training for incident survival?
• Do you have crisis management guidelines for different incident scenarios?
• Do you feel that the news of security incidents, also from others operating in your environment, reaches you quickly most of the time?
• Do you feel that you as security manager have the required skill and competence to discharge that responsibility?  

Although aid personnel strive to provide humanitarian assistance even as the level of violence escalates, there are limits to how long personnel remain safely in the midst of conflict. The determination of whether to remain or evacuate is a complex balance of humanitarian need, resources, expertise, reputation within the region, and leadership personalities that is managed in most of the larger NGOs by a dedicated security section. For areas or countries of persistent conflict, the NGO may assign a dedicated security officer or team to evaluate changing local threats and risks.

Often NGO security officers have military or police backgrounds and will have access to a wide variety of information sources and assessment tools. In addition to working with organizations like Interaction’s Security Advisory Group (SAG), NGO security officers will stay abreast of the local military and police briefings. NGO security officers do not normally have access to classified material, but many times they do have more timely and granular information because of their access to reports directly from the field. And though NGO personnel will watch for changes in UN security phases they normally reserve the right to make independent determinations on whether to remain or stay.

Those who chose to remain in country as the number of threats and level of risk increases must make the choices between how they balance risk management against risk reduction. The responsibility of each aid worker is to understand the host culture and behave in a manner respectful of cultural norms while remaining vigilant to any changes to the environment that may pose a threat to personal safety. These threats may include and aren’t limited to theft, assault, violent conflict and acts of terror, vehicle targeting, and natural phenomena. Safety and security risks are an unavoidable aspect of humanitarian service. Lack of

UN Security Phases

1. Precautionary: Exercise caution. All travel into the area requires advance clearance.
2. Restricted movement: Staff and families remain at home. No travel into or within the country unless authorized.
3. Relocation: Staff and families are temporarily concentrated or relocated to specified sites or locations. Eligible dependants are relocated outside the country.
4. Emergency programs only. All staff not directly concerned with emergency or humanitarian relief operations or security matters are relocated outside the country.
5. Evacuation. All remaining staff leave according to the local UN security plan.

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infrastructure and limitations of local institutions exacerbate these risks. It is not possible to eliminate all risks associated with these missions, but it is possible to manage them.

**Humanitarian Space**

Civilian aid organizations often strive to defend their *humanitarian space*, by which they mean their ability to deliver assistance to populations in need without compromise by military or political forces. Many NGOs feel strongly that their access to local populations requires independence from armed forces, including peacekeeping and U.S. forces.

Whether on the battlefield or in the ungoverned spaces of an internal state conflict, a need remains to provide food, water, shelter and protection to noncombatants. The Geneva Convention (IV), *Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, states this:

> Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. 187

Where the Geneva Conventions are observed, the wounded and sick should be collected and cared for by an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC’s mission is, on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and protocols, to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and those affected by internal disturbances or tension.

In complex humanitarian emergencies where the armed combatants do not honor their responsibilities and block the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, it becomes more challenging for NGOs to provide life-sustaining services without injury or loss of life.

Thus, when warring parties fail to respect the humanitarian purpose of interventions, “the attempt to provide assistance in situations of conflict may potentially render civilians more vulnerable to attack, or may on occasion bring unintended advantage to one or more of the warring parties.” 188 This presents additional challenges to the humanitarian community who are committed to achieving “defined levels of service for people affected by calamity or armed conflict, and to promote the observance of fundamental humanitarian principles.” 189 To continue to provide assistance even when the armed parties have abdicated their responsibilities under the *Law of Land Warfare* (FM 27-10), NGOs must resort to ensuring their own protection a variety of ways.

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187 ICRC, “Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949,” [www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/385cc082b509e76c41256739003e636d/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5](http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/385cc082b509e76c41256739003e636d/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5).

188 IFRC, *The SPHERE Project*, p. 18.

189 Ibid., p. 16.
NGOs that act on humanitarian principles and strive not to be or perceived as being instruments of government foreign policy can be viewed as a target or threat by power brokers in the region. In assessing the potential threat humanitarian programs might present, NGOs should ask themselves several questions:\footnote{Van Brabant, \textit{Operational Security Management in Violent Environments}, p. 40–41.}

- Can the national origin of your agency, your source of funding, or the way you operate (such as in the areas of certain actors only or under the umbrella of a peacekeeping force that is not perceived as neutral) cause you to be perceived as being associated with certain political interests or certain groups that are actors in the conflict?
- Can certain public statements of your agency be construed as indicating a hidden political agenda?
- Can your programs be perceived as strengthening the war economy or the political economy of somebody’s enemy?
- Are you undermining someone else’s power base?

Once an assessment of the programmatic impact on the existing stakeholder relationships, NGOs need to examine the more concrete sources of risk. This can include asking questions like the following:

- Do your programs put you in the path of military operations?
- Are your operations too close to potential political or military targets?
- Can your entry and exit routes be affected?
- Do your programs put you in areas that are important to the war economy or the illegal trade transactions that are a part of it?
- Do you have lootable resources in residences, offices, warehouses, programs, and the like?
- Do your program activities take you into high crime areas?
- If abuses and atrocities are committed can you be seen as an undesirable witness?

\textbf{Site Selection and Facilities Management}

Answers to these questions will drive the selection of the NGO’s operating base and field offices. Physical spaces should be conducive to a secure and productive work environment yet provide access to workers, beneficiaries, and colleagues and preventing intrusion and attack by undesirable individuals. Over the years of operating in uncertain and hostile environments, the NGO community has designed checklists, to assist security officers in site selection.\footnote{InterAction, \textit{Suggested Guidance for Implementing InterAction’s Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS)}, \url{www.interaction.org/document/suggested-guidance-implementing-interaction%E2%80%99s-minimum-operating-security-standards-moss} (accessed November 10, 2009).} These can include a variety of questions.

\textit{Neighborhood}

- Do you know at least one of your neighbors?
- Do any NGO colleagues live in your area?
• Do you live on a two-way paved and well-maintained street?
• Do you live on a dead-end street?
• Are there several roads into or out of the neighborhood?
• Is your street a high-traffic or pedestrian route?
• Is there a history of crime in your neighborhood?
• Are the streets well lighted at night?
• Is there a major transportation station across the street or near your house?
• Is there a fire station within a 5-minute drive of your home?
• Is there a police station in your neighborhood?
• Are there any host government officials or ministers living in your area?
• Are you located near a university, opposition party office, or newspaper?

Exterior
• Are all gates and doors kept locked and keys in your control?
• Do you have a means to control access to your residence?
• Do you employ trained guards?
• Are guards’ duties clearly defined and understood?
• Is your residence enclosed by a solid perimeter wall?
• Are there any trees, poles, or outbuildings close to the walls?
• Is the compound kept free of brush and debris?
• Are the premises and stairwells well lighted?
• Do you have a dog?

Doors
• Are doors made of solid core (wood or metal) construction?
• Are exterior locks cylinder type?
• Are doors equipped with deadbolt locks?
• Are all locks securely mounted?
• Can all exterior doors—terrace, porch, balcony, basement—be securely locked?
• Are there windows or soft door panels that when broken gain access to locks?
• Does anyone besides your immediate family have keys to your residence?
• Are unused doors permanently secured?
• Do you hide a main door spare key under a mat or flower pot nearby?
• Do you have a peephole, video monitor, or interview grille at main door?
• Are padlocks locked in place when doors are unlocked?
• Are padlock hasps securely installed so that screws cannot be removed?

Windows
• Are all first-floor windows protected with grilles?
• Are any window grilles hinged so as to be opened from inside?
• Are unused windows permanently secured and sealed?
• Are all windows securely mounted?
• Will breaking the glass give access to window locks?
• Are sliding glass doors secured with a track lock?
• Can upper story windows be easily accessed?
• Do any windows offer view of main entrance or street?

**Interior**
• Is there a lockable, secure room to which you can retreat from danger?
• Are tools and equipment kept in a secure place?
• Do you keep your cash and valuables in a secure place?
• Do you have a list of serial numbers for valuable appliances (VCR, stereo, TV)?
• Do you maintain a property inventory?
• Are valuables properly described or photographed?
• Are valuables on display in common areas of the residence?
• Do you receive mail or deliveries at home?
• Have you developed procedures and guidance for family or workers in the event of break-in or burglary?
• Have you posted the emergency contact information of police, fire, hospital, and so on?
• Does your residence have an evacuation plan and outside meeting point?
• Have you checked the references and health history of your domestic workers?

**Security equipment**
• Are fire extinguishers located around the residence?
• Has the fire fighting equipment been inspected or charged in the last year?
• Do all residents and workers know how to use fire fighting equipment?
• Are smoke detectors installed throughout the residence?
• Are batteries tested and changed regularly?
• Do you have a cell phone or handheld radio and spare batteries in the bedroom?
• Have you installed caller identification?
• Have you installed an alarm system?
• Do you shred all personal documents before discarding?

Serious consideration needs to be given to whether to highlight or downplay an NGO’s presence in country. In general, where humanitarian space and the neutrality of NGO personnel are respected, the more likely the location of the headquarters will be openly advertised.

**Personnel**

Personal safety starts with the individual aid worker. Because NGO personnel must work in very dynamic and semi-autonomous situations with few resources and little backup, they require a high level of initiative, resourcefulness, maturity and judgment. Successful missions require workers to adjust their habits and lifestyles to minimize exposure to risks.
The SPHERE code of conduct states NGO personnel “will endeavor to respect the culture, structure, and customs of the communities and countries we are working in.” To accomplish this, NGO personnel will adjust their physical appearance, living arrangements, modes of travel, venues for entertainment, accountability, and sources of companionship to the expectations of the local population. In addition to being a beneficial, nonthreatening member of society, the acceptance strategy requires personnel to establish and maintain broad-based relationships and to sustain inclusive contacts with multiple authorities and powerbrokers while maintaining an image that is both respectful and respected.

Unlike a military force, which commands respect through force of arms, humanitarian workers can rely only on their reputation, which may take years to build and be destroyed in an instant. As a result, NGO personnel are extremely sensitive with being seen as instruments of government foreign policy, even when they might share the same nationality or even mission as the military force.

### Communications

Appropriate technology, procedures, and training are necessary for clear, coordinated, and effective external and internal communications systems. Communications provide some unique challenges to NGOs that military personnel are unlikely to wrestle with, however.

NGOs strive to provide assistance based on need rather than race, religion, political affiliation, or ability to pay. To avoid the perception of favoritism and operate in a neutral manner, NGO do not normally use any encryption devices and operate with the understanding that the local government will likely be monitoring all their communications. Because NGOs may provide assistance to all parties in the conflict, they will be exposed to sensitive information that could be used to assist the political or military objectives of either side. This requires that information be recorded and transmitted in a way that reduces rather than fuels conflict.

Although modern communications equipment is essential for the NGO headquarters to remain in contact with field offices or mobile teams, the equipment might make NGO personnel a target of crime in areas where the technology is not commonly available. A satellite phone, which provides an NGO team global coverage, might represent the ability to tip the balance of power in a conflict. The same might apply for a vehicle outfitted with a communication suite of HF, UHF, or VHF radios. In some areas, simply carrying a cell phone or radio could be viewed as a threat by those who would like to keep their activities concealed. Thus even as NGO personnel must maintain communication between themselves and higher headquarters, they must be careful to select equipment that will not increase the risk to themselves or the mission.

NGO communications specialists thus have an enormously challenging job of selecting equipment that will allow reliable communication without raising the NGO’s profile or risk to aid personnel working unarmed in areas of high risk. Security officers must educate and train NGO personnel as to

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what should and cannot be transmitted by radio, cell phone, or e-mail. And, as noted earlier, it is the responsibility of individual NGO personnel to practice and master their respective communication protocols.

## Transportation

Reliable transportation is essential for NGO operations, but also poses the greatest risk of accidents, assault, injury, and death for aid workers. "At least half of all security incidents occur during travel."\(^{194}\) To minimize these risks, adequate resources for proper vehicle selection, maintenance, driver employment, protective equipment, and procedures all are necessary.

Vehicle selection is perhaps the most critical first step. Understanding the environmental conditions of travel, the availability of fuel, parts, and trained mechanics will extend the lifespan of a vehicle. However, the NGO must balance the need for a completely reliable low mileage vehicle against raising the risk of becoming a target of carjacking in areas of conflict or crime. It is critical to follow a vehicle maintenance schedule, especially when operating in rough terrain or extreme climate conditions.

Perhaps the second most important transportation safety factor is ensuring that drivers are properly trained and in the correct frame of mind when behind the wheel. Familiarizing personnel with the unique characteristics of environment will reduce surprise caused by sharing the road with animals, pushcarts, or unmarked sections of the under construction. Driving while tired or with the added stress in a conflict area can increase the chance of an accident for even the safest driver.

Sometimes NGOs mitigate these risks by hiring local drivers. Besides the basic requirements of a valid drivers license, driving experience, good eyesight, and maturity, the driver should have technical competence with the vehicle in question. The driver will have influence which routes are taken, how check points are negotiated, and over time become a de facto representative of the organization. The added benefit of having someone who knows their way around thus comes with its own risks.

A driver from a disenfranchised group, whether religious, ethnic, racial, or caste, may engender prejudice against the NGO. The driver might also be part of a group intent on stealing the vehicle or committing a crime against the NGO. Background checks are useful but not always effective in areas without a criminal justice system or where people use many different personal names.

## Reporting and Responding to Security Incidents

Incident report data analysis and dissemination is critical to project management and decision-making, not only for an individual NGO, but also for all the other organizations involved in providing assistance in the same area. Patterns, trends, and events in the local culture and environment contribute to appropriate planning, training, and allocation of resources. If this is done openly and inclusively, developing a common operating picture can benefit to the host government, the military,

\(^{194}\) Ibid., p. 113.
and NGOs alike. That said, levels of information sharing will differ depending on the relationship with the reporting organization.

Internally, there needs to be a incident report mechanism that immediately alerts all other members of the NGO of all environmental and mission changes with safety and security implications. This is usually the most important and difficult task because it depends on individual team members to record and share information that may not seem important or particularly useful at the time.

At a minimum, the report should normally include who is reporting, what happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, what the impact is on those affected, who perpetrated the incident, a summary of the current situation, and whether any problems arose, actions were proposed or taken, or decisions or actions requested of headquarters.\footnote{195 Ibid., pp. 240–41.}

In high tempo or stress environments, events such as looting a store or destroying a bridge may happen so frequently that they reset the threshold for a critical event. Thus, though it is important for NGO personnel to comprehensively understand the local environment, key actors, and pulse of daily life, becoming too familiar with violence and destruction can breed complacency about an ever-increasing threat level.

Other challenges to information sharing are compounded when members of a team have different experience levels or rotate on a regular basis. Without knowing the character and temperament of colleagues or respecting and trusting their judgment, the group dynamics of the team rapidly break down, opening information gaps that can lead to accidents or attacks.

Sometimes local staff are not privy to certain information or are excluded from team meetings. This can erode trust and have fatal results given that the local staff often have a better understanding of the social undercurrents that can in turn affect the safety and security of the NGO’s personnel or operations. Sometimes the field office may withhold information from headquarters in fear that headquarters might curtail operations, making a proper analysis of the need to evacuate difficult. Thus the planning and training before deployment and refresher training throughout the operation are critical to the long-term success of any operation.

Security planning is an ongoing process that continually refines and reassesses the threat environment. By establishing and enforcing policies and procedures and providing guidance for possible contingencies NGOs can reduce the most obvious risks and mitigate the worst effects of accidents and attacks.
Before the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, many NGOs operated in violent environments without developing a strong organizational culture of safety and security. Many times, aid personnel relied on the immunity provided by humanitarian space and did not view themselves as party to the conflict. A series of factors including, intermingling of NGO and U.S. government programming, specific targeting of NGO staff for kidnapping and execution by violent extremist groups, and the shift in U.S. military policy to begin engaging directly in reconstruction and stabilization activities all served in increase the risks of injury and death for NGO personnel.

As a result, the many of the NGOs who remained in Afghanistan and Iraq have built more formal safety and security systems to meet the new threats. These changes include adding safety and security measures to grant proposals and providing safety and security education and training courses for deploying personnel. Perhaps one of the most important changes has been an increased recruitment of professional security officers with formal military, police, or intelligence experience.

**NGOs and Security Officers**

Large NGOs such as CARE, Save the Children, and World Vision have full-time security officers and a small security department. They provide advice on field safety and security issues, conduct assessments for field offices, and are responsible for policy and procedure. Many of these departments are supplemented by contractors with varying security experience for short- and long-term field assignments.

Although large NGOs have a headquarters security staff, headquarters itself often doesn’t have control over all aspects of field safety and security. Field security staff may view directives as advisory, subject to interpretation. An established command structure, as found in the military is not present in NGOs.

Each NGO country office usually has someone within senior management staff responsible for safety and security, but this individual is usually part of the logistics, administrative, or operations division, and not a dedicated security officer. Security officers are brought in to assist if the need arises.

Some organizations are moving toward having security focal points in each of the field office that would report to the country office. Safety and security are not the primary functions of the field office, however, and personnel in these focal points tend to be local or national staff.

Medium-sized NGOs may or may not have security staff. Security is usually assigned to someone as a secondary duty, typically someone overseeing program management. Small NGOs may have someone with an interest in security with past military or law enforcement experience, but typically have no established security functions.

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196 Ibid., p. 9.
Security Coordination in the Field

The face of NGO security may change in the future with USAID calling for standardization of security policies and procedures for funded NGOs. InterAction, an organization that represents U.S. NGO interests, has called for minimum operating standards for security, as well.

Currently, coordination efforts follow one of three models:

- funded bodies, such as ANSO in Afghanistan, which serves the entire humanitarian community in a location;
- ad hoc, which is a cooperative effort staffed by security officers working in a location, usually larger NGOs in high threat environments; or
- the United Nations, which dictates policy and procedures.

Although previously perceived by the military as lax about security, NGOs since the 1990s have created a plethora of security protocols, manuals, and guidelines to reflect the nature of what they do. Manuals, protocols, papers, and further reading can be found on all aspects of NGO security at a number of online resources.

**RESOURCE: Security-Related Reading**

- Security manuals
  [http://ngosecurity.googlepages.com/safety%26securitymanuals](http://ngosecurity.googlepages.com/safety%26securitymanuals)

- Papers, reports and studies

- InterAction
  [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

- European Commission Humanitarian Aid Development Office

- International Security Assistance Force
  [www.nato.int/isaf](http://www.nato.int/isaf)

- NGO Security Blogspot
  [http://ngosecurity.blogspot.com/2006/01/primary-readings.html](http://ngosecurity.blogspot.com/2006/01/primary-readings.html)