

THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE



HOW
PEACEKEEPERS
CAN BETTER
PROTECT
CIVILIANS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Refugees International would like to thank the staff (past and present) of the UN, AU and EU peacekeeping operations in DR Congo, Chad, Sudan and Somalia, as well as the staff at UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York for sharing their time and insights. We would like to thank the authors of *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges*, and *A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, for their analysis. We would also like to thank the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and in particular the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay, as well as the troop and police contributing countries, for their collective role in moving forward the important issues of peacekeeping reform and the protection of civilians. We applaud and support these efforts. Finally, Refugees International would like to thank all of the refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the many local people in Chad, Sudan, DR Congo and beyond who have been so generous with their time, support and, most critically, their stories.

Children greet peacekeepers near a UN peacekeeping base in Rwindi, North Kivu Province. (DR Congo, October 2009.)

Credit: Jiro Ose

ABOUT REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

Refugees International advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people and promotes solutions to displacement crises. Based on our on-the-ground knowledge of key humanitarian emergencies, Refugees International successfully challenges governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations to improve the lives of displaced people around the world.

Refugees International is based in Washington, DC and is the leading independent advocacy organization on refugee crises. We do not accept government or United Nations funding, relying instead on contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations. Learn more at www.refugeesinternational.org.

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<p>The very presence of peacekeepers creates expectations among local people that they will be protected if violence erupts.</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</p> <p>When violent conflict breaks out, the United States and other United Nations member states often call for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to create stability and protect people from harm. The UN Security Council has explicitly instructed peacekeepers to protect civilians under “imminent threat of violence” in most UN peacekeeping mandates since 1999. But there is no clarity as to what “protection” means in practice. Which circumstances require action and what level of force should be used? This has resulted in a lack of proper training, guidance and resources for peacekeepers to accomplish protection activities.</p> <p>This report draws on Refugees International’s field analysis and the recommendations made in two comprehensive UN studies. It outlines concrete steps that the UN Security Council, the U.S. and other UN member states can take to address these challenges and improve peacekeepers’ ability to keep people safe in times of armed conflict.</p> <p>The first challenge peacekeeping missions face is that protection of civilians is not the only priority of a peacekeeping mission. For example, the mandate for the UN peacekeeping mission in the DR Congo incorporates over 40 discreet tasks. Modern peacekeeping operations are asked to support everything from ceasefire agreements to long-term peacebuilding activities. Further, the strategies needed to protect people vary significantly depending on the type and scale of the threat. Peacekeepers may have to protect people from large-scale attacks as well as banditry and day-to-day violence. They must protect UN staff, humanitarian workers, and, of course, the peacekeepers themselves.</p> <p>Commanders on the ground should not be placed in the politically difficult position to choose between competing priorities. Security Council members must craft mandates that are realistic in scope and reflect the political context and actual resources available to carry out the job. To help the Security Council do this, it is essential that early assessment teams identify the nature, persistence and scale of threats to civilian safety. The UN Secretariat and mission leadership must also clearly advise the Security Council on their actual mission requirements.</p> <p>It is also essential that the Security Council consider the political implications of protection vis-à-vis other mission tasks. The very presence of peacekeepers creates expectations among local people that they will be protected if violence erupts. The failure to meet these expectations can result in a breakdown of wider mission legitimacy that will make it extremely difficult for peacekeepers to accomplish other, long-term peacebuilding objectives.</p> <p>The UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is a telling example of the cost of unclear mandates. UNMIS was deployed and resourced primarily to support the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, but its mandate included language to protect civilians under “imminent threat of violence.” In an outbreak of violence in May 2008, thousands of people were displaced and the town of Abyei was destroyed. Local communities and international humanitarian actors were outraged that UNMIS had failed to prevent the crisis. Yet, the peacekeepers did not feel that they had the resources required to respond, and the terms of the mandate led many people within the mission to deny that this sort of protection was their responsibility.</p> <p>The lack of clarity is made even more challenging by the fact that peacekeepers do not have a standard doctrine on how to conduct protection activities. This forces peacekeepers to improvise tactics in the field. Traditional military doctrines and training were built mainly to defend territories, not to protect individuals. While a refugee camp is more straightforward to defend, it is much more difficult to plan an operation to protect civilians in far-flung communities.</p>
<p>i</p>	<p>THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</p>

<p>Nonetheless, peacekeepers have developed some activities to protect people. Many regularly conduct foot and vehicle patrols in vulnerable areas to deter attacks. Other forces have established small bases near villages where violence is likely to take place. In the DR Congo and southern Sudan, peacekeeping missions are forming joint civilian and military protection teams to assess needs and work with local community leaders to develop concrete protection strategies. Despite these efforts, there is still a need for a uniform operational definition of what protection means from a peacekeeping perspective to guide their planning and activities.</p> <p>Another way to eliminate confusion in the field is to improve peacekeeping training. In addition to the standard lessons on international humanitarian law, peacekeeper training modules should be constantly updated to incorporate emerging protection strategies and tactics that have developed and proved effective over time. In particular, the U.S. Global Peace Operations initiative should work closely with the UN and other training bodies to incorporate latest practices and ensure that peacekeepers from around the world share a common understanding of their protection roles and strategies.</p> <p>Clear, forceful mandates and improved training will go a long way towards addressing peacekeepers’ challenges. However, these efforts will show no results if peacekeepers are left blind, overstretched, and immobile. Peacekeeping missions routinely operate with a shortage of troops, civilian staff and equipment in some of the most insecure and logistically challenging environments in the world. It is essential that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN Secretariat identify the resources that are required to fulfill protection activities effectively. Once the needs are better understood, it will be necessary for UN member states to show a greater willingness to provide those tools.</p> <p>Finally, it is clear that peacekeepers and the wider community of humanitarian actors — including UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — must cooperate better to coordinate their activities when responding to a humanitarian crisis. One way to accomplish this is to hold senior mission leadership, as well as the humanitarian leadership that coordinates civilian protection activities (typically the UN High Commissioner for Refugees), accountable for ensuring constructive and ongoing engagement and dialogue between peacekeepers and the humanitarian community.</p> <p>Real reform will only be possible if UN member states show their commitment to driving forward these changes. For this reason, the U.S. government has a crucial role to play. It can help craft strong, clear mandates with achievable objectives. It can support the proactive use of force to protect civilians in harm’s way, and work with global training partners to ensure high standards of quality and consistency. The U.S. is also in a position to offer advanced military expertise and specialized equipment — such as appropriate armored vehicles and intelligence gathering equipment. With these efforts, the U.S. could help make it possible for peacekeepers to better identify threats against civilians, respond more quickly to violent attacks and maximize the use of scarce resources in the field.</p> <p>When a crisis breaks out, the U.S. and other world leaders must do more than simply call out, “Send in the peacekeepers!” Sometimes peacekeeping isn’t the answer and other options should be considered. However, by ensuring that peacekeepers have strong, clear mandates, and the necessary guidance, tools and training, the UN and its member states can substantially improve peacekeeping operations. More importantly, they will be taking meaningful steps to maintain stability and prevent the horrific abuse and displacement of civilians around the world.</p>	<p>Peacekeeping missions routinely operate with a shortage of troops, civilian staff and equipment in some of the most insecure and logistically challenging environments in the world.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>ii</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Today there are roughly 42 million civilians around the world who have been forced to abandon their homes, their jobs and the people they love as a result of armed conflict...</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</h2> <p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The many crises of the 1990s in which civilians bore the brunt of appalling violence — the massacre in Srebrenica, genocide in Rwanda, mass amputation in Sierra Leone, to name a few — alerted the world in unambiguous terms that civilians everywhere had targets on their backs. Since then the implicit “protection” aims¹ of United Nations peacekeeping missions — enforcement of human rights standards and the maintenance of public order — have become increasingly explicit and prominent in UN peacekeeping mandates.² In fact instructions to protect civilians under “imminent threat of violence” have appeared in most UN peacekeeping mandates since 1999.³ Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping missions continue to struggle with how best to protect people facing such threats.</p> <p>Today there are roughly 42 million civilians around the world⁴ who have been forced to abandon their homes, their jobs, and the people they love as a result of armed conflict and deliberate and systematic attacks against their communities. Over 270,000 Darfurians⁵ escaped vicious attacks on their home villages, only to take refuge in the militarized refugee camps of eastern Chad; hundreds of thousands of Iraqis find themselves living in abject poverty in the cities of Syria and Jordan⁶; and some 1,277,000 Somalis displaced from Mogadishu⁷ have been unable to flee the country at all. Instead many are trapped in the treacherous Afgooey corridor — the largest concentration of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world — as aid workers struggle to provide them with the most basic necessities of life.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT CAN THE U.S. DO?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use its position on the UN Security Council to support the crafting of clear mandates with achievable objectives.</i> • <i>Provide ongoing political support — both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions such as the UN — to peacekeeping operations, relevant peace processes, and sanctions, as well as the proactive, if controversial, protection efforts on the part of peacekeepers in the field.</i> • <i>Provide specialized equipment — such as appropriate armored vehicles, helicopters, information gathering equipment, etc. — to peacekeeping operations to ensure that peacekeepers have all necessary resources to fulfill their mandate.</i> • <i>Provide U.S. military enabling units and support, such as Staff Officers, medical and engineering units, and lift-and-sustain capabilities, to enable peacekeeping missions to deploy quickly and operate effectively.</i> • <i>Ensure that GPOI training modules are routinely modified to incorporate the most up-to-date lessons on protection doctrine and UN guidance, and that GPOI staff continue to work closely with the UN and global training partners to ensure that international peacekeeper training reflects the highest standards of quality and consistency.</i> • <i>Strengthen the ability of governments to fulfill their sovereign protection responsibilities by partnering with host governments to support effective security sector reform efforts in post-conflict situations.</i> • <i>Continue to pay the US assessed share of UN peacekeeping operations in full and on time.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</p>

Sometimes peacekeeping isn't the answer, and more robust "peace enforcement" options need to be considered.⁸ However, in times of crisis, the United States — along with other United Nations member states — often calls for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to create stability and protect civilians from harm. In many instances the deployment of UN peacekeepers has had the effect of preventing displacement, or creating the stability and confidence for people to return home. Just one example is the remote village of Ntoto in the North Kivu province of DR Congo. This village had been almost completely abandoned due to insecurity, but the deployment of a small Temporary Operating Base (TOB) of UN peacekeepers in 2009 allowed roughly 450 families to return home. In October 2009 a local teacher told Refugees International that without the peacekeepers none of the local children would be in school.

These types of results have been inconsistent at best. Peacekeeping missions routinely operate with a shortage of troops, civilian staff, and appropriate vehicles and equipment in some of the most insecure and logistically challenging environments in the world. This lack of resources can be linked in part to a lack of consensus about what it is that we want peacekeepers to do and, therefore, a lack of understanding as to what resources and training peacekeepers need in order to fulfill their mandate.

"Protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence" is now routinely cited as a peacekeeping priority, but there is a real lack of clarity as to what "protection" means in the context of a peacekeeping operation. Therefore, peacekeepers often lack proper training and guidance on protection activities before they deploy. This lack of conceptual clarity is exacerbated by the complexity of peacekeeping mandates, many of which incorporate a huge range of difficult and resource-intensive responsibilities alongside civilian protection. Finally, disagreement and misunderstanding over the protection role of peacekeepers in

relation to their non-military counterparts creates difficulties in coordinating the activities of the wider community of groups responding to a humanitarian crisis — including UN humanitarian agencies and humanitarian and development focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Refugees International has seen how the protection efforts of UN peacekeepers can prevent displacement, ensure the security of refugee and IDP sites, and improve stability so that people displaced by conflict can return home in safety. Yet, there are also times when peacekeepers' efforts have not produced the desired results. For this reason, this report is outlining concrete steps that the UN Security Council, troop contributing countries, and UN Member States — including the U.S. — can take to increase protection for hundreds of thousands of civilians coping with violent conflict. The report ultimately examines what peacekeepers need in order to fulfill protection mandates and the challenges in meeting these needs.

In addition to Refugees International's own field-based analysis of peacekeeping missions in Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia, the recommendations in this report draw heavily on the analysis presented in two crucial UN studies. The first is the December 2009 jointly commissioned OCHA/DPKO study, *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges*,⁹ and the second is the July 2009 report, *A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*,¹⁰ written by DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS). These are referred to throughout the following text as the "OCHA/DPKO study" and the "New Horizon report" respectively. These reports present a comprehensive and critical set of recommendations on how UN peacekeeping efforts can be strengthened to better meet their objectives, most critically with regards to the protection of civilians. This report aims to support and highlight these ideas.

There is a real lack of clarity as to what "protection" means in the context of a peacekeeping operation.

WHAT IS “PROTECTION”?

Fatima’s Story

Fatima,¹¹ a 30-year-old woman from the Darfur region of Sudan was displaced in 2004 when her village was attacked by the Janjaweed militia. She fled to Chad with her children. Her husband used to travel between Darfur and the refugee camp, but Fatima no longer knows if he is dead or alive. She is on her own.

Today Fatima and her children live in the Oure Cassoni refugee camp in eastern Chad, just five kilometers away from the Sudanese border. The camp is well known to be infiltrated by rebels with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), who use the site as a rear base and a recruitment ground for their struggle against the Sudanese government in Khartoum. The camp leaders are well aware of these activities. The JEM, which is viewed as a liberation movement by many people inside the refugee camp, is tolerated, and recruitment is seen as patriotic. There are long standing plans for the UN peacekeeping operation in eastern Chad and the Central Africa Republic, MINURCAT, to deploy a base nearby to try to increase the general

security in the area, but the camp is open on all sides, making it nearly impossible to monitor or control who enters the site.

Fatima told RI researchers that in order to attract young boys to the movement, JEM rebels hold parties in the desert with loud music and races in a nearby waddi. When Fatima’s own 13-year-old son disappeared with four of his friends, Fatima took the remarkable and potentially dangerous step of tracking him down herself. She successfully negotiated the release of her son and his friends, but is now seen as a trouble maker by the camp leaders who support the JEM. She fears for her safety.

Fatima also faces other dangers. As a single woman she faces a greater threat of theft and sexual violence within the camp. Outside the camp, overwhelming poverty and a breakdown of law and order, resulting from Chad’s own internal conflict, has increasingly produced violent banditry and intimidation of both local people and the refugees. Further, huge strains on basic resources such as water and wood mean that when refugees leave the site to collect these items

A Sudanese woman carries water in the Oure Cassoni refugee camp in eastern Chad. The camp is home to roughly 27,000 refugees who fled ongoing violence in the nearby Darfur region of Sudan. (Chad, May 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir



<p>they are often attacked by hostile members of the local community.</p> <p>Thus, for Fatima and her children, the escape from acute violence in Darfur has only led her into a day-to-day struggle for security and survival.</p> <p>In times of crisis one often hears politicians, journalists and other advocates calling for peacekeepers to “protect people better.” But protection is no simple task, and has no single meaning. As Fatima’s story illustrates, civilians face a huge range of protection crises in times of conflict, and the word “protection” can imply very different things depending on the context, the nature of the threat, and the perspectives of the people responsible for making “protection” happen.</p> <p>Nature of the Threat: Protection from What?</p> <p>The most pronounced types of threat are sometimes called “the four crimes”: genocide, war crimes, crimes against</p> <p>humanity and ethnic cleansing.¹² The violence witnessed in Rwanda in 1994, Srebrenica in 1995, Darfur in 2004, and DR Congo in 2008, consisted of mass, systematic attacks on a population typically perpetrated or instigated by coordinated armed groups such as government forces or rebel movements. However, large scale, coordinated attacks are not the only types of threat that civilians face in times of armed conflict.</p> <p>Conflict creates generalized insecurity and instability, the result of a breakdown of rule of law and security institutions like the police, or the diversion of security personnel, military, police and gendarmes to deal with the larger threat. This leaves civilians vulnerable to banditry, petty crime and violence, coerced recruitment into armed groups, forced labor, and illegal taxation, among other things. Each of these threats presents different logistical challenges, and requires different types of military strategies and capabilities.</p>	<p>In times of crisis one often hears... advocates calling for peacekeepers to “protect people better.” But protection is no simple task and has no single meaning.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">MASS ATROCITY CRIMES</p> <p>Rwanda – 1994: Roughly 800,000 civilians were slaughtered in towns and villages throughout the country. <i>“The systematic slaughter of men, women and children which took place over the course of about 100 days between April and July of 1994 will forever be remembered as one of the most abhorrent events of the twentieth century.”</i>¹³</p> <p>Srebrenica (Bosnia) – 1995: <i>“After Srebrenica fell to besieging Serbian forces in July 1995, a truly terrible massacre of the Muslim population appears to have taken place.... Thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mothers’ eyes... these are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history.”</i>¹⁴</p> <p>Darfur (Sudan) – 2004: In 2006, Amb. Richard Williamson wrote, <i>“A numbing number of people have died in Darfur, with estimates ranging up to 400,000. More than 2 million (Darfurians) have been driven from their homes. Most now live in desperate conditions in refugee camps in southern Sudan and neighboring Chad.... In addition to malnutrition and disease, a number of refugee camps have been attacked by the Janjaweed. The nightmare is not over.”</i>¹⁵</p> <p>Kiwanja (DR Congo) – 2008: 150 civilians, mainly young men, were executed — often before the eyes of their families — by the militia led by self-proclaimed General Laurent Nkunda. The victims were accused of being Mayi-Mayi, a government-allied militia. <i>“The executions in Kiwanja are a study in the unfettered cruelty meted out by the armed groups fighting for power and resources in eastern Congo.”</i>¹⁶</p>	
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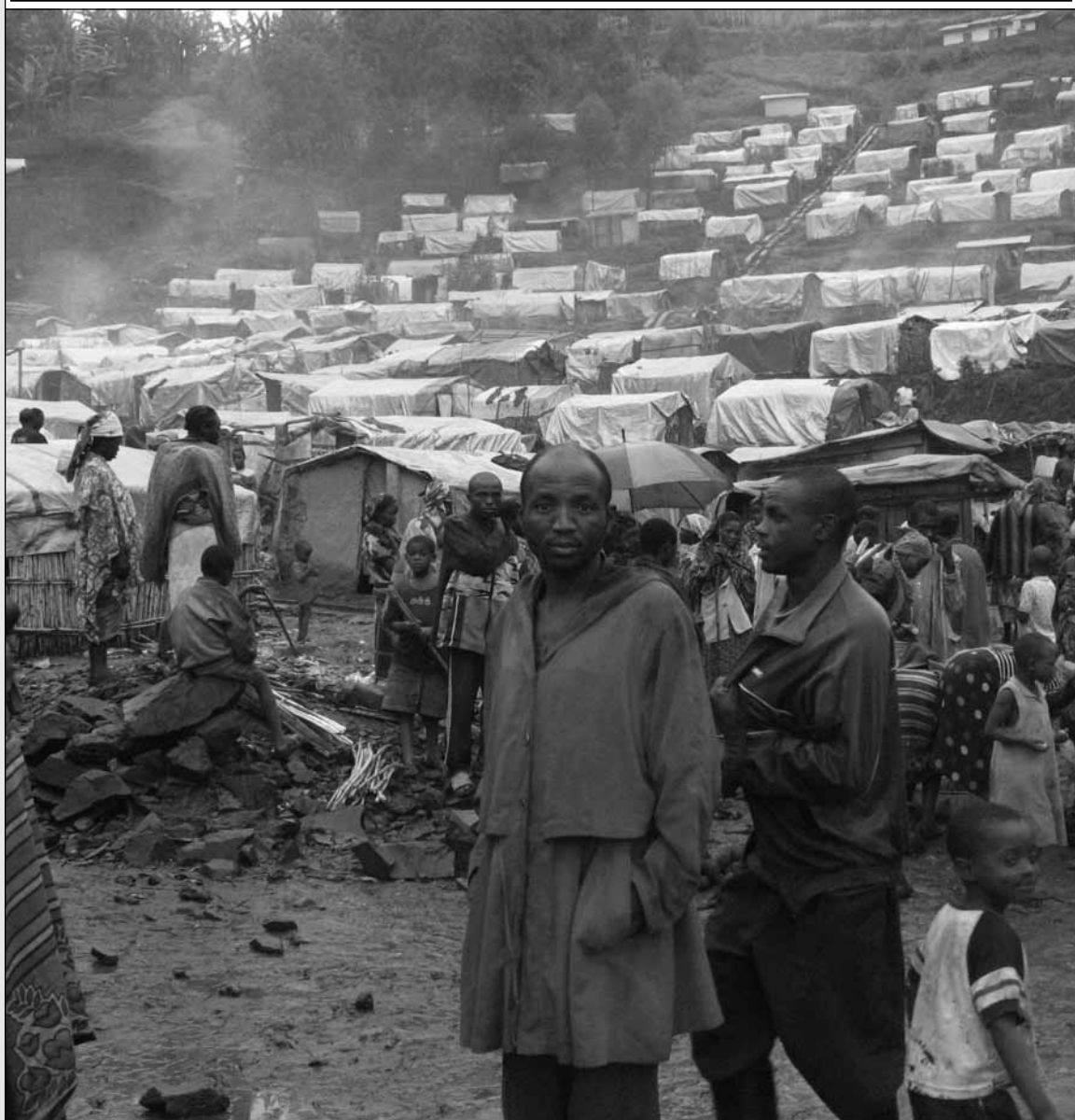
CASE STUDY 1 — Day-to-day Insecurity in Eastern DR Congo

In 2009 the Congolese Armed Forces mounted operations to dislodge the FDLR rebel group — a Hutu militia with links to the 1994 Rwandan genocide — from their strongholds in North and South Kivu provinces. Many hundreds of thousand of civilians were displaced. As one Congolese official said, “It’s ironic that the army has come to chase the FDLR, and it’s the population who flees.” In September 2009, Refugees International reported the following:

“In Mwenga a number of people told RI that they were able to escape in advance of the operations after hearing government warnings on the radio. Many were forced by the FDLR to pay a ‘tax’ to get out.... Among those who were able to flee with their personal items, many ended up having them stolen along the road by armed men as they attempted to make their way to safer areas. Many displaced people also heard that their houses had been completely looted or destroyed after they fled.”¹⁷

Hundreds of thousands of Congolese civilians have been displaced from their homes and live in makeshift camps like this one in Masisi, North Kivu Province. (DR Congo, January 2009.)

*Credit: Refugees International/
Camilla Olson*





MONUC security escorts help protect UN personnel in the volatile North and South Kivu provinces of DR Congo. (DR Congo, October 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir

Peacekeeping operations often lack appropriate or sufficient resources to respond effectively. This is particularly true in countries like DR Congo or Sudan, where the sheer space and the inaccessibility of the populations at risk make it extremely difficult to be present everywhere they need to be. Further, the actual tasks that need to be performed in order to keep civilians safe are not always clear, as there is very little protection doctrine to guide the protection activities of military peacekeepers.¹⁸

**Scope of the Responsibility:
Protection of Whom?**

When considering peacekeepers’ capacity to protect civilians from harm under the difficult and varied circumstances outlined above, it is important to consider that it is not just the security of local civilians that peacekeepers are responsible for. Protection tasks also typically include responsibility for UN staff, humanitarian workers, and, of course, for the peacekeepers themselves.

One prototypical example is Security Council Resolution 1590 (March 2005), when the UN Security Council authorized the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to:

“...take the necessary action, in the areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers, ...and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Sudan, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence...”¹⁹

This short paragraph places a huge burden of responsibility on the mission. In fact, given limited resources and difficult operational environments, the scope of tasks that can be associated with a mandate like this often puts peacekeepers in the difficult and controversial position of needing to prioritize certain elements of their protection duties over others, invariably leaving someone or something unprotected.

UN Personnel, Facilities and Equipment

In an average peacekeeping operation, the UN will have a number of military bases, civilian offices, storage facilities, and other strategic sites (airstrips, for example) under its protection. Depending on the circumstances in which they have been deployed,

<p style="text-align: center;">Uniformed peacekeepers (military and police) take a number of steps to try to ensure the safety of UN personnel as well as non-UN humanitarian actors.</p>	<p>these facilities and assets can become targets as a source of militia re-supply or for political, strategic, or economic reasons. Therefore, peacekeepers need to invest significant resources just in protecting these mission-critical sites.</p> <p>Defending these assets and protecting UN staff are referred to as “force protection.” In times of crisis, force protection requirements have an impact on the number of troops that can be deployed from their bases to protect others. This also has an impact on the number of troops available for patrols and escorts.</p> <p>In October 2008 a crisis in North Kivu in the eastern DR Congo illustrated how basic force protection needs can make it difficult for peacekeepers to react to a sudden change in the nature of the threat against civilians. In an effort to locate peacekeepers closer to vulnerable communities, MONUC peacekeepers had been deployed in small Temporary Operating Bases of 50 or 60 troops to remote areas where civilians were perceived to be under threat. This was intended to give peacekeepers faster, more consistent access to people facing great day-to-day insecurity.</p> <p>When the rebel group National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) launched a number of sudden, large-scale attacks,</p> <p>international commentators speculated as to why the peacekeepers had been unable to prevent violence and massacres, in spite of having a peacekeeping base nearby. However, of the small number of peacekeepers deployed to each of the bases in the flashpoint areas, roughly one third were tied up in force protection activities and unable to support wider civilian protection efforts.²⁰</p> <p><i>Security and Freedom of Movement of UN Personnel and Humanitarian Workers</i></p> <p>Uniformed peacekeepers (military and police) take a number of steps to try to ensure the safety of UN personnel as well as non-UN humanitarian actors. This is at the discretion of the organizations in question, and some, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and <i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i>, typically do not accept UN support in order to guard their independent, humanitarian status.</p> <p>Peacekeepers provide armed escorts for the movement of civilian staff through dangerous areas. They support the distribution of humanitarian assistance by securing aid convoys and distribution sites. Military peacekeepers also support the evacuation of civilian staff in times of crisis.</p> <p>The availability of armed escorts is a source of tension between civilian staff, humanitar-</p>
	<p>CASE STUDY 2 — Protection Crisis in Eastern DR Congo</p> <p>In October and November of 2008, offensive actions taken by a militia known as the CNDP, created a worst-case-scenario for civilian protection in the North Kivu province of the DR Congo. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people were displaced <i>again</i>, and IDP sites were destroyed in a matter of days. MONUC peacekeepers were vastly overstretched, numbering just 6,000 in North Kivu at the time of the attacks (roughly one soldier for every 60km² of territory). Furthermore, contradictions in mandate required that MONUC forces both provide <i>support</i> to the Congolese military, and <i>police</i> ceasefire lines between the military and the CNDP. This cast the peacekeepers as enemies to all sides, including civilians, who erupted in angry protest against the UN. Civilians attacked UN vehicles and mobbed UN installations when the CNDP began to advance on Goma.</p> <p>In a November 5, 2008 report, Refugees International wrote the following:</p> <p><i>“On October 29, 2008 (shortly after the initial CNDP attack) the Security Council called on MONUC to ‘continue to implement fully its mandate in all aspects, in particular by robust actions to protect civilians’ ...[T]his sort of rhetoric is disingenuous.... [I]t is a statement designed to mollify home constituencies to appear to have prioritized the protection of civilians without committing to the expensive business of actually enhancing MONUC’s ability to do the job.”²¹</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</p>

ians and military peacekeepers. In many environments, civilian staff (especially UN humanitarian staff due to UN security rules) are dependent upon the availability of armed escorts in order to do their work. They have a legitimate need for frequent and flexible access to escorts in order to properly monitor their programs and ensure the effective oversight and management of refugee camps and internal displacement sites. Military peacekeepers, however, often cite numerous challenges as reasons why they cannot provide escorts as often as UN staff and humanitarian actors would want them to. This includes a lack of total avail-

able troops; transport equipment including trucks and more protective armored vehicles; and specialized capabilities, such as medical evacuations that are typically linked to a lack of helicopters or certified landing sites.

Civilians under Imminent Threat of Physical Violence

Protection of civilians from “imminent threat” is the trickiest and the most visible part of the protection mandate. As discussed above, its definition depends on the nature of the conflict, the nature of the threat at a given moment, and the nature of the terrain that peacekeepers are working in. However,

CASE STUDY 3 — Humanitarian Action Threatened by Day-to-Day Banditry in Eastern Chad

In July 2008, Refugees International reported the following:

“Insecurity in Chad is the product of a variety of domestic and regional crises that have displaced some 185,000 Chadians inside the country, and brought almost 250,000 Sudanese refugees into eastern Chad from neighboring Darfur. Chad has been the site of a protracted civil war in which a number of often fragmented rebel movements continue to launch attacks on towns throughout the east....

Chad’s rebels, however, do not represent the most immediate threat to civilians... The greatest threat to civilians and humanitarian operations is banditry. Bandit groups, which sometimes involve local authorities, the Chadian military, and moonlighting police or gendarmerie, act with almost complete impunity in the eastern part of the country... These bandits are responsible for chronic car-jackings (specifically the theft of 4x4s belonging to humanitarian actors) and the violent looting of humanitarian workers and local civilians throughout the east. The threat becomes particularly acute in the wake of a rebel attack, when bandits capitalize on the chaos and the absence of local authorities.”²²



Internally displaced Chadians return from a market near Goz Beida. The vast space and the breakdown of rule-of-law has created ideal conditions for banditry and looting in Chad’s eastern region. (Chad, May 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir

<p style="text-align: center;">The ability of a peacekeeping force to fulfill [protection] expectations is powerfully linked to the overall legitimacy of the mission and therefore, the mission's ability to accomplish other peacebuilding objectives.</p>	<p>it refers generally to the protection of any civilian that can reasonably be expected to be in danger of imminent violent attack. This can refer to individuals or communities, and protection might take place in identifiable refugee or IDP sites, or in a more diffused way throughout communities in conflict affected areas.</p> <p>While the language may seem clear on the surface, all of these contextual variables create challenges and raise different legal and political questions for peacekeepers. As one peacekeeper put it, "...our duty is the protection of civilians. Whether we can do it or not is another matter."²³ Nevertheless, the inclusion of "imminent threat" language in a mandate invariably raises the expectations of civilians at risk. As such, the ability — or inability — of a peacekeeping force to fulfill these expectations is powerfully linked to the overall legitimacy of the mission in the eyes of local people, and therefore, the mission's ability to accomplish other stabilization and political peacebuilding objectives.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Get the Protection Assessment Right: Early strategic and technical assessment teams need to have protection strongly in mind from the earliest stages of a new mission's development. The nature, persistence, and</p> <p>scale of the threats to civilian safety, as well as the likelihood of escalation need to be clearly identified. The assessment of these threats will determine what sorts of strategies and resources a mission will need in order to carry out protection tasks. Members of the assessment teams must be trained to identify threats to civilian safety — both in terms of day-to-day insecurity and large-scale atrocities — and be given clear direction to make protection a core part of all assessments.</p> <p>Candor Regarding Mission Needs: The Secretary General's reports, as well as in-person consultations with Security Council members must reflect the true situation on the ground, and make clear new or changing mission requirements. Conversely, the Security Council must take this input seriously, and adjust mandates and resources accordingly, and in a timely manner. This recommendation was first cited in the August 2000 "Brahimi Report" (<i>Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations</i>) and repeated in the 2009 report on <i>Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations</i>.²⁴ The repetition, ten years later, is evidence that the UN Secretariat and mission leadership continue to be timid in their discussions of what peacekeepers need in order to do their jobs.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">CASE STUDY 4 — The Goz Beida Incident: A Threat to Refugees and Local Civilians in Eastern Chad</p> <p>In June 2008, rebels in the eastern region of Chad began a series of attacks, the most serious of which occurred in a town called Goz Beida. At the time of the attack, a European Union peacekeeping mission (EUFOR) was deployed and preparing for a handover to the UN. Goz Beida was the site of a large contingent of EU soldiers, as well as the launching pad for large humanitarian operations in a number of nearby refugee camps and IDP sites.</p> <p>When the attack began, the peacekeepers, who had been deployed with a strong protection mandate, were faced with three very different protection challenges: barring rebel access to the refugee camps, protecting individual civilians in the town, and evacuating humanitarian staff. The peacekeepers set up a defensive cordon around the camps and sent patrols and armored personnel carriers to demonstrate presence in the town and to begin the evacuation of humanitarian workers.</p> <p>Over a year after the incident, a Darfurian refugee in a nearby camp cited that day in June 2008, and told RI researchers that she felt safe in the camp because the peacekeepers had proved that they would be there when the refugees needed them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</p>

ORIGINAL “IMMINENT THREAT” LANGUAGE, AS INCLUDED IN THE 1999 SECURITY COUNCIL MANDATE FOR THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE (UNAMSIL):

...Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, decides that in the discharge of its mandate UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence...

This continues to be the core language used in peacekeeping mandates today,²⁵ though it is typically followed by caveats. (See page 10.)

PROTECTION AND UN PEACEKEEPING MANDATES

History of “Imminent Threat” Language

The UN Security Council first began to incorporate explicit instructions to protect civilians — often referred to as the “imminent threat language” — in response to serious mass atrocities such as those perpetrated in Rwanda and the Balkans in the early 1990s. In Rwanda, the mandated neutrality of the mission, combined with a sheer lack of resources, resulted in peacekeepers literally standing by as genocide occurred under their noses. In Srebrenica, the presence of UN peacekeepers was not enough to prevent the systematic killing of thousands of civilians, and a report following the massacre reflected the sentiment that “the cardinal lesson of Srebrenica is that a deliberate and systematic attempt to terrorize, expel, or murder an entire people must be met decisively with all necessary means.”²⁶

In addition to Rwanda and Bosnia, reports reflecting on experiences in Cambodia, Kosovo and Somalia similarly “found peacekeeping missions unable to protect the very populations they were deployed to assist.”²⁷

In light of these crises, members of the Security Council became determined to take action to prevent such events from occurring yet again, first in Sierra Leone, and then in many of the peacekeeping mandates issued since. However, as the OCHA/DPKO study pointed out,

“It is widely recognized that the Council’s conceptualization of the protection of civilians has varied over time. It has used the term ‘protection of civilians’ in relation to protection norms set out in the Geneva Conventions and subsequent Protocols. Alternatively, it has used them in a much more narrow sense, to describe the mandated role of peacekeepers ‘to provide physical protection’ through their use of ‘military capabilities in the field to deter attacks on civilians or, sometimes, to use force to defend civilians from attack.’”²⁸

In other words, the members of the Security Council are anxious to prevent massacres and other serious attacks against people, but have no common, agreed definition as to what they mean when they ask peacekeepers to “protect” civilians. Nonetheless, the “imminent threat” language in mandates has remained fundamentally the same, even as expectations have changed and increased dramatically.

Caveats

In spite of the ongoing lack of conceptual clarity at the level of the Security Council there has been some effort on the part of the Security Council to limit protection expectations levied on peacekeepers. Generally this is done by creating caveats in the mandate.

In the course of the October 1999 debates around the UNAMSIL mandate, the representative from Argentina stated:

The “imminent threat” language in mandates has remained fundamentally the same, even as expectations have changed and increased dramatically.

Wives and children of demobilized militia members wait to board a UN helicopter on their way back to Rwanda. Among its many tasks, the peace-keeping mission in the DR Congo is responsible for disarming, demobilizing and repatriating armed actors who remain active in the east of the country. (North Kivu Province, DR Congo, October 2009.)

Credit: Jiro Ose



“We believe that the protection of civilians under Chapter VII is a pertinent development in the context of the mandate of a peacekeeping operation.... This bears on the credibility of the Security Council and shows that the Council has learned from its own experience and that it will not remain indifferent to indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population. At the same time, we are realistic. The object to be fulfilled must be consonant with the means provided.”

The representative went on to talk about the objective, geographic and functional limits of the protection mandate, a reflection of the parameters of Security Council expectations with regards to protection.²⁹

The language in the 2005 UNMIS mandate is a good example of the types of caveats now typically associated with “imminent threat” language in a mandate:

*“The Security Council; Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, (i) Decides that UNMIS is authorized to take the necessary action, **in the area of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities**, [...] and without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Sudan, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.”³⁰*

First, this caveat restricts the UNMIS area of responsibility to the parts of Sudan that peacekeepers were deployed in. For example, UNMIS was deployed in southern Sudan and Khartoum in 2005. Even though serious protection concerns existed in the Darfur region of Sudan at this time, this caveat — coupled with real geographic restrictions associated with the UN’s Status of Forces Agreement with the government of Sudan — meant UNMIS was not being asked to take action in that part of the country.

Second, the caveat “within its capabilities” gives field commanders the authority to determine whether or not they have the means to intervene effectively without incurring undue risk to the peacekeepers themselves. This often means that that protection mandates are interpreted and applied very differently, even within the same mission. Lack of sufficient and appropriate resources — troops, mobility, field hospitals, etc. — can (and has) resulted in protection mandates going unfulfilled.

There are often valid reasons why a commander invokes the “within capabilities” caveat. Yet, this language is also vague enough as to be a convenient excuse if a commander, or the home capital of the troop contributing country in question, is unwilling to use robust military action to protect civilians. This makes it all the more important that the Security Council makes their intentions clear from the outset; that troop contributing countries are clearly aware of what sort of a commitment they are making; and that peacekeepers are properly equipped to provide protection from the real threats in country.

Recommendations

Clarity between the Secretariat and troop contributing countries (TCCs): Before Memorandums of Understanding are finalized, DPKO must ensure that TCCs clearly understand and accept the expectations being placed on their peacekeepers with regards to the protection of civilians. This is particularly the case when the nature of the threats against civilians changes, or there is a sharp escalation of violence. Similarly, the OCHA/DPKO study points out, “Member states should be clear regarding national caveats. All too often, the unexpected invocation of national caveats can interfere with command and control of missions in the field, a hazard when violence escalates and peacekeepers face challenges.”³¹

Accountability of Mission Leadership: Mission leadership needs to be better prepared to assume the complex demands of a protection mandate, particularly in the context of complex, multidimensional peacekeeping operations. As the OCHA/DPKO study states, “Mission leaders...need to be held accountable for the production of mission-wide strategies and for reporting on their results. When leaders do not ask for results, it reduces the ability and chances for missions to achieve their aims.”³²



Troops of the UN peacekeeping mission in Chad conduct foot patrols to demonstrate presence and deter attacks against civilians. (Chad, May 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir

Protection has rarely been the core priority of the mission or of the Security Council members who crafted the mandates.

PROTECTION AS A PRIORITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR, ACHIEVABLE MANDATES

The UNMIS Example

The UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is a telling example of the confusion and human cost of unclear mandates. It also illustrates the consequences of the failure to equip peacekeepers to fulfill mandated protection tasks.

The focus of the UNMIS mandate was not protection. Rather, UNMIS was “conceived primarily as an observer and verification mission,”³³ deployed in order to “support implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement”³⁴ and militarily equipped for a bare minimum of force protection activities.³⁵ “Imminent threat” language was included in order to give peacekeepers the authority to intervene if and when they deemed it necessary and possible, but the mission was never equipped to carry out large-scale protection efforts. Implicit in the Secretary General’s reports and Security Council resolutions was that protection was an afterthought.³⁶

In this circumstance, the imminent threat language raised the expectations of civilians. Meanwhile, scarce resources and the lack of prioritization of the UNMIS protection role by the Security Council and mission leadership functionally guaranteed that those expectations would not be met. When violence broke out in Abyei in May 2008, local communities were outraged that UNMIS had failed to prevent the crisis and the resulting displacement of thousands of people. Yet, the mandate simultaneously fostered a defensive attitude among UNMIS peacekeepers that “protection is not what we are here for.”³⁷ In an interview with RI researchers in 2008, one senior UNMIS official said that “in the event of an attack we are barely equipped to protect ourselves.”³⁸

An Explicit Objective

While protection language has appeared in most UN peacekeeping mandates since 1999,⁴⁰ protection has rarely been the core priority of the mission or of the Security Council members who crafted the mandates. In spite of recent appearances, it is important to recognize that in fact protection of civilians has only very recently become an explicit peacekeeping objective.⁴¹

CASE STUDY 5 — The Abyei Incident: A Breakdown of Protection in Southern Sudan

In 2009, Refugees International described the following May 2008 incident:

“(The) outbreak of violence between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in the town of Abyei, an oil rich and contested area on the border between the north and the south, started as a small incident between individual soldiers at a military checkpoint that snowballed quickly into a full scale military confrontation. The incident resulted in the displacement of the entire population of Abyei and its surrounding areas, and the town itself was razed to the ground.

“In the aftermath of the crisis, UNMIS faced a huge backlash from local communities, international advocates, and representatives of Security Council member states for its failure to diffuse the situation before it escalated, and for failing to protect civilians and prevent their displacement. A UN review of the incident found that the Mission had acted more-or-less appropriately under the circumstances and cited a lack of military capability to intervene robustly and severe limitations on movement imposed by the Sudanese Government of National Unity. Nevertheless, situations like this one, in combination with the inability and occasional unwillingness of the UNMIS military to engage with local people, has led some to insist that UNMIS really stands for ‘Unnecessary Mission in Sudan.’ ”³⁹

Importantly, even where mandates do prioritize protection, modern multidimensional peacekeeping operations are charged with the daunting and far reaching tasks involved in managing transitions from war to peace, typically in places where peace is thin on the ground.⁴² This involves a huge range of tasks, including:

- Supporting ceasefire agreements;
- Supporting peace processes;
- Extending initial security and stability gains into longer-term peacebuilding; and
- Supporting other peace and security actors through Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) programs.⁴³

The mandate for the UN peacekeeping mission in the DR Congo (MONUC), for example, incorporates over 40 discreet tasks, and the mission staff have, justifiably, maintained that they have never been properly equipped to fulfill them all. In the case of MONUC, the crisis in October 2008 (see page 7), combined with a lack of resources and a failure on the part of the Security Council to be clear about its own priorities, left the peacekeepers in the unfair position of having to prioritize certain tasks and deprioritize others without guidance from their political masters in New York.

Mission leadership should not be expected to make ad hoc decisions about mission priorities in the field. When the Security Council crafts a mandate, civilian protection needs

Internally displaced Darfurian women leave a camp meeting in North Darfur. (Darfur, Sudan, July 2006.)

*Credit: Refugees International/
Megan Fowler*



to be clearly prioritized, with the understanding that this complex task will affect the mission's capacity to fulfill the rest of its work. In particular, the Security Council must recognize the fact that the mere presence of peacekeepers — regardless of caveats — creates protection expectations among local civilians. The failure to live up to these expectations can result in a breakdown of the mission's overall legitimacy, both as a protection actor, and as a political actor. As such, Council members need to be clear in their intent and take primary political responsibility for prioritizing tasks.

Recommendations

Clear, Achievable Mandates: All members of the UN Security Council must work to ensure that peacekeeping mandates are a clear reflection of Security Council intent and free of political contradictions. The protection of civilians is a resource-intensive effort, and the prioritization of protection in a peacekeeping mandate will have an impact on the mission's

overall ability to perform other tasks. The Security Council must ensure that peacekeepers are given the necessary resources to fulfill protection tasks, as well as any other responsibilities included in the mandate.

Strong Political Backing from Member States: UN peacekeepers' abilities to fulfill their mandated goals are strongly affected by the level of bilateral and multilateral political support that the mission receives from its political masters in the Security Council. As the OCHA/DPKO study rightly notes,

“The Council’s role is not just to get mission mandate language ‘right,’ but to back up UN peacekeeping operations with political support to the underlying structures of the mission — and to the protection of civilians. Examples include efforts to support peace agreements and negotiations, to bring spoilers into a political agreement, and to support an environment in which the operation can succeed.”⁴⁴

A displaced Congolese woman sits outside her temporary home with her three children. This family was displaced by the ongoing violence in eastern DR Congo. (DR Congo, February 2009.)

*Credit: Refugees International/
Camilla Olson*



PREPARING TO PROTECT: TRAINING AND ADVANCED MISSION PLANNING

The lack of clear prioritization of protection objectives by the Security Council is typically magnified by weaknesses in the mission planning and preparation processes, where mandates are translated into people and activities in the field.

It is critical that protection considerations be included in every stage of the mission planning process. Planners and assessment teams must also understand protection issues in order to be able to identify challenges and plan accordingly. In particular, protection activities and the corresponding resource needs should be analyzed and incorporated at crucial “pivot points” in the planning process. This includes the strategic assessment stage, the development of the Under Secretary General’s Planning Directive, the report of the Technical Assessment Mission to the Security Council, the development of the Concept of Operations (ConOps), as well as briefings to troop contributing countries.⁴⁵

Throughout this process, and throughout the life of a peacekeeping mission, it is also critical that the Secretariat — including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support, and the mission leadership — be brutally honest with the Security Council and troop contributing countries (TCCs). They must make clear the exact resources that they need, rather than limiting requests to politically palatable levels.⁴⁶

Guidance and Doctrine

While military peacekeepers are a relatively new addition to the protection toolbox, they are at the heart of the discussion about the physical protection of civilians in armed conflict. However, it is often not recognized that “protection doesn’t relate directly to standard military parlance, doctrine, or training, neither by TCCs nor by states that train personnel for peacekeeping.”⁴⁷

Traditional military structures, tasks and training methods were designed to defend territories, not to protect individuals, and this is a critical distinction. Where it might be



Children from a nearby village in North Kivu province come out to watch a UN helicopter land near the UN peacekeeping base. Many Temporary Operating Bases depend entirely on helicopters to deploy troops and re-supply materials in remote locations like this one. (DR Congo, October 2009.)

Credit: Jiro Ose

<p style="text-align: center;">The peculiar conditions that distinguish peacekeeping operations from war fighting scenarios make it difficult for peacekeepers to translate their mandates into operational realities.</p>	<p>relatively straightforward for peacekeepers to plan to defend a refugee camp — a defined, contained and wholly civilian site — against attack, it is much more difficult to plan an operation aimed at protecting civilians in far-flung communities. This is especially true when the peacekeepers cannot prevent the assailants from entering the communities in the first place, or when threats relate to a generalized lack of law-and-order, such as banditry, rather than coordinated attacks.⁴⁸</p> <p>While many commanders in the field have sought to adapt military tactics to the task at hand, the peculiar conditions that distinguish peacekeeping operations from war fighting scenarios make it difficult for peacekeepers to translate their mandates into operational realities.</p> <p>The Goz Beida crisis in eastern Chad in June 2008 provides a good example of the complex and sometimes conflicting rules that military peacekeepers are expected to navigate in the field. (See Case Study 4, page 9.) Soldiers were deployed as part of the European Union Peacekeeping Mission (EUFOR) and faced the dilemma of having a protection mandate — including authority to use force — couched in a mandate and political context that demanded strict neutrality. Specifically, the peacekeepers were instructed not to impede the movement of rebel forces (that is, not defend the town territorially), but they were nevertheless required to defend the civilians inside the town.</p> <p>The force deployed soldiers to patrol the area and evacuated humanitarian workers, but did not prevent the rebels from entering the town and looting compounds. In the aftermath of the attack, the mission faced stark criticism for failing to defend civilian property, particularly the humanitarian equipment that had been looted or destroyed. But the fundamental conflict within the EUFOR mandate between the need to protect and to remain neutral — coupled with the lack of clear military protection doctrine — forced the peacekeepers to improvise their response. That the results were not wholly</p> <p>satisfactory to humanitarian actors points to a breakdown in protection guidance, rather than a lack of effort or will on the part of the peacekeepers.</p> <p>In order to eliminate the confusion and improvisational approach to protection in the field, three gaps need to be filled: clarifying and consolidating peacekeeper’s strategies, capacity, and authority to act.⁴⁹</p> <p>Strategies</p> <p>Clear connections need to be drawn between policy and military roles related to protection.⁵⁰ As the OCHA/DPKO study notes, “One core challenge is defining the objective — protecting civilians — in terms that military personnel recognize and can take action to support.”⁵¹ Much more work needs to be done to translate abstract objectives into concrete military strategies and to train new peacekeepers to apply protection strategies.</p> <p>In spite of the lack of clarity, there are a few standard and evolving “protection” activities undertaken by military peacekeepers which can be broadly characterized as “presence and patrolling.”⁵² Ongoing foot and vehicle patrols in vulnerable areas serve as a deterrent to those who would harm the population. Some of these are conducted close to peacekeeping deployments, whereas others are much longer range and may require air transport. As the OCHA/DPKO study states:</p> <p><i>“...Patrols... demonstrate the presence of the mission and imply a deterrent capacity that will take action if violence is observed or anticipated within the area of patrolling. Some patrols are specifically designed to support those at risk of attack, especially women, during routine activities such as harvests, collecting firewood, or going to market. These patrols have grown in popularity and have become regularized in some missions.”⁵³</i></p> <p>In addition to short and long range patrols, UN peacekeeping missions may also endeavor to take on a more substantial and longer-term presence in areas where attacks are anticipated. This sort of presence can mean</p>
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the cordoning off of sites for refugees or internally displaced people, or establishing small bases — such as Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs) or Mobile Operating Bases (MOBs) — near villages where violence is likely to take place.⁵⁴

Recently the UN peacekeeping missions in the DR Congo (MONUC) and Sudan (UNMIS) have begun to develop a more wide-ranging approach to protection. They are incorporating civilian staff from substantive sections such

as the Civil Affairs, Political Affairs, Human Rights, and Child Protection units within the mission. The role of these special teams, called Joint Protection Teams (JPTs), is to: conduct assessments in cooperation with military peacekeepers; provide a civilian interface between the mission and local communities; and work with community leaders and uniformed peacekeepers to develop concrete, localized protection strategies that use all available protection resources to keep civilians safe.

CASE STUDY 6 — Ntoto, DR Congo and the Joint Protection Team

Ntoto is a small, remote village in North Kivu Province, where just 53 MONUC soldiers are based. The Joint Protection Team has developed a detailed community protection plan, identifying vulnerable individuals and infrastructure (e.g. schools and dispensaries) as well as a plan with local leaders to get civilians to safety when violence erupts. Daily foot patrols in and around the village, as well as longer-range patrols, also deter attacks and maintain the confidence of the local people.

In October 2009, Refugees International reported the following:

“The peacekeepers have built a strong relationship with the local community. In our two days on the base we met numerous community leaders from Ntoto and surrounding villages who had come unsolicited — always on foot, and often from several hours away — to speak with the commander and share news. [We] were told by a local school teacher that over 450 families who had been displaced by violence earlier in the year had returned home as a result of the protection that the MONUC soldiers had provided...”⁵⁵



A military UN peacekeeper and the Joint Protection Team leader walk with local children during a daily foot patrol in a village in North Kivu province. The Joint Protection Teams help design local protection plans in case violence erupts. (DR Congo, October 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir

<p>Clear guidance on protection cannot be developed until there is an operational baseline understanding of the concept. However, certain tactics... have emerged over time.</p>	<p>Unfortunately there are limits to the effectiveness of the “presence and patrolling” approach to protection. In the field peacekeepers face a number of challenges and situations that can confuse and confound protection efforts. The OCHA/DPKO study highlights a few of these:</p> <p><i>“In areas where threats against civilians escalate, the UN mission is challenged to take action beyond offering presence. Such challenges can... take the form of an illegal checkpoint whose operators tell the UN to turn around or, in a more extreme version, a request from the government to remove UN forces from an area where it aims to conduct offensive operations. In both cases, the question is how far the UN force is prepared to go to uphold, impartially, the mandate to protect civilians. In one sense, basic patrolling is connected to robust defense of civilians under threat in that the latter is implied by the former. Yet UN peacekeepers frequently identified this very link as a grey area on which they find it difficult to take a position. This uncertainty reflects questions about whether they have the authority to defend the civilians, whether they are willing, whether they have capacity, whether they know what to do, whether the strategy will work, and whether they will have backup if needed.”⁵⁶</i></p> <p>These questions point to the fact that mandates alone leave critical gaps in guidance to peacekeepers who are — or perceive themselves to be — constrained by the particular political and legal character of UN peacekeeping operations, and are not operating according to normal war fighting rules and dynamics. As one peacekeeper has said, “You can come with armored personnel carriers with full capacity but here is this one guy sitting in the sun. Until he drops the string, you don’t pass.⁵⁷ We have the capacity to overrun the checkpoint, but at what cost?”⁵⁸</p> <p>Peacekeepers need better guidance and strategies to deal with the particular protection challenges that they face, and that are very</p> <p>different to those of other protection actors. Specifically, the design of protection guidance and doctrine needs to be underpinned by an operational definition of protection from the peacekeeping perspective.</p> <p>Capacity: Training and Equipping Peacekeepers</p> <p>The lack of sufficient and appropriate military capacity is often cited as a key reason why protection objectives aren’t met. Equipment, logistical capabilities, the availability of backup support, and appropriate military and protection specific training are all crucial to the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation.</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Currently, protection-related training for peacekeepers is often limited to training on international humanitarian law (such as the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols). As such, the training focuses on what soldiers are not supposed to do in times of war, and on the roles and activities of international humanitarian actors (discussed on pp. 22-24). There is no consistent training on what soldiers should be doing to protect.</p> <p>As discussed above, clear guidance on protection cannot be developed until there is an operational baseline understanding of the concept. However, certain tactics — such as patrolling and presence — have emerged over time. These lessons need to be captured and as guidance becomes more developed, it is critical that the baseline assumptions, tactics and strategies associated with the protection of civilians are incorporated quickly into training modules for incoming staff officers, contingent commanders and their troops.⁵⁹</p> <p>Similarly, training offered by major donor governments, such as the U.S. and the U.K., needs to incorporate lessons learned and adopt new doctrines as they develop. In particular, it is critical that international training initiatives such as the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) programs are updated and delivered in close collaboration with the Policy, Training and Evaluation</p>
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<p>Division of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), as well as the implementers of other international training initiatives. This will help ensure the consistency and quality of peacekeeper training.</p> <p>It is sometimes difficult for peacekeepers from different countries — with different military cultures, languages, and operational styles — to work as a cohesive whole. But this can be overcome somewhat if all peacekeepers begin with a common understanding of what protection is, and how it can best be translated into daily tasks and strategies.</p> <p><i>Equipment</i></p> <p>In addition to a better definition of protection, there is also a need for DPKO to develop a more complete understanding of what sorts of resources are required to fulfill protection activities effectively. Once the needs are better understood, it will be necessary for UN member states to show a greater willingness to provide those tools.⁶⁰</p> <p>In its New Horizon report, DPKO identified a number of critical capabilities gaps affecting peacekeepers in 2009. Three of these were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility Assets: Civilian and military helicopters, “strategic airlift” (the ability to transport troops, equipment and supplies into countries where peacekeepers are deployed) and infantry units with appropriate vehicles to move quickly. • Enablers: Military engineering, logistical and transportation units. • Information Gathering Capacity: Surveillance equipment and staff, as well as data management capabilities and the expertise needed to analyze the information collected.⁶¹ <p>In 2009 peacekeepers were routinely left without appropriate or dependable means to deploy new resources, to establish or re-supply bases, or to move troops or supplies around within their areas of operation. They additionally lacked the ability to monitor the</p>	<p>activities of armed groups and other spoilers. Clear, forceful mandates mean nothing if peacekeepers are left blind, immobile, and short of supplies in the field. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to mobilize member states to give peacekeeping missions the resources they need to get the job done.⁶²</p> <p>For its part, the Secretariat also needs to define more precisely what sorts of resources are needed in order to meet the demands of modern peacekeeping operations, including protection tasks. As the New Horizon report states,</p> <p><i>“Current and likely future demands for UN peacekeeping require a high degree of mobility and specialization of military, police and civilian capabilities.... To match personnel and equipment to the tasks...[the UN] needs to move from a quantitative focus on numbers to a qualitative approach.... This demands the development of standards and their systematic linkage to training, equipping and delivery on the ground.”⁶³</i></p> <p>At present, some prospective troop contributing countries with smaller, more streamlined and specialized military structures have encountered strong bureaucratic barriers to contributing to peacekeeping operations. This has been the result of UN force generation standards based on an antiquated <i>quantitative</i> model (e.g. the size of a unit), as opposed to matching troop offers with <i>qualitative</i> requirements (what the given unit is able to <i>do</i> operationally).</p> <p>Authority: Rules of Engagement and Security Council Support</p> <p>Military commanders are frequently hesitant to instruct their soldiers to use force in order to protect civilians. This is sometimes due to limitations placed on the activities of peacekeepers by their home government (the troop contributing country) and a lack of political support from the Security Council.⁶⁴ In addition, lack of a clear expression of the Force Commander’s intent with regards to protection can lead to inconsistent interpretations of the Rules of Engagement (ROEs), the rules that specify</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>20</p>

Clear, forceful mandates mean nothing if peacekeepers are left blind, immobile, and short of supplies in the field.

A local child in a village in North Kivu joins with UN peacekeepers in their morning exercises. Day-to-day interaction with local people is critical to good protection strategies, but peacekeepers are often left without translators or other means to communicate with the people they are meant to protect.

Credit: Jiro Ose



how, and under what circumstances, a soldier is authorized to use force. This can mean that within a single mission, different commanders interpret their authority to use force to protect in very different ways.

In one interview a senior military peacekeeper told RI researchers that the disincentives to use force — even in the face of a protection threat — are so great that individual soldiers do not feel empowered to be proactive, regardless of the mandate.⁶⁵ Furthermore, without clear leadership and guidance pertaining to the rules of engagement — and the knowledge that robust protection actions will be defended and supported by mission leadership, the Security Council, and home governments — very few soldiers will be willing to assume the individual risk currently associated with the use of force.

Recommendations

Create an Operational Definition of Protection in Peacekeeping: The operational definition should reflect the protection needs in terms of day-to-day protection strategies, as well as protection in the event of a sharp escalation of violence and large-scale targeted attacks. As the OCHA/DPKO study states, “*The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should lead the development, in consultation with humanitarian and human rights actors, of an operational*

concept of protection of civilians to assist with the development of planning, preparedness, and guidance for future peacekeeping missions.”⁶⁶

Train Peacekeepers to Protect: In addition to the standard lessons on international humanitarian protection concepts and laws, it is necessary for peacekeepers to be taught how protection mandates translate into peacekeeping tasks and strategies. Military tasks need to be interpreted as they relate to day-to-day protection and the prevention of mass atrocities. Furthermore, international peacekeeping training initiatives — such as the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) — need to incorporate evolving guidance and lessons learned into training modules, and work closely with the UN and other international training bodies and donors to ensure that peacekeepers share a common understanding of their protection roles and strategies.

Identify Required Capacities: It is critical that the resources necessary to fulfill protection tasks be concretely identified and that UN member states are forthcoming with the resources that make civilian protection mandates achievable. UN administrative systems must also be reformed to ensure that a qualitative approach to force generation replaces an outdated and obstructive quantitative approach.

THE WIDER PROTECTION COMMUNITY

Protection of civilians is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the host government. However, in times of conflict governments are often unable or unwilling to protect their own people. It is for this reason that peacekeeping mandates routinely include provisions for the re-building of institutions of governance, rule of law, and the security sector, as well as the protection of civilians in the interim.

Humanitarian actors have a long-established and growing role in civilian protection. The recent efforts to improve protection activities have centered strongly on military peacekeepers' efforts and shortfalls. This focus on physical protection is not a reflection of greater importance vis-a-vis humanitarian protection work. Rather, "protection" has a relatively clear meaning for humanitarian actors, but has never been adequately defined or operationalized from a physical, peacekeeping, perspective. As the OCHA/DPKO study notes,

"UN peacekeeping missions do not, and cannot... 'own' the concept of protection. They bring their skills and assets to operational arenas in which other protec-

tion actors are present.... [I]t is essential that a holistic solution be sought and that the actions can be coherent and mutually reinforcing where possible."⁶⁷

The events of the early 1990s that have shaped the discussion of protection mandates, also precipitated a community-wide re-evaluation of humanitarian action. Situations such as the humanitarian and security crisis in Somalia in 1993 and the Rwandan refugee crisis in (then) Zaire in 1994 saw humanitarian relief feeding dramatically into the cycle of conflict. This caused humanitarian organizations to assess very seriously the need for better coordination and communication, and the need to ensure that aid does not feed the very conflict that has caused the humanitarian suffering in question. For the first time, humanitarian agencies adopted the medical mantra of "do no harm."

In addition to the protection actors that are internal to peacekeeping missions (including Civilian Protection, Child Protection, and Human Rights units) there is a huge range of protection actors present in the field alongside most peacekeeping operations. These can be broadly divided into three groups: The International Committee of

Protection of civilians is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the host government.

CASE STUDY 7 — DR Congo Protection Cluster Breakdown

In 2009 a contradiction in the mandate for the peacekeepers in the DR Congo (MONUC) resulted in a major breakdown in communication and coordination between MONUC and the humanitarian community. The mandate called for the mission to provide support to the predatory Congolese military, the FARDC, and to prioritize the protection of civilians.

Humanitarian actors interpreted MONUC support of the FARDC to mean that the peacekeepers were just another military party to the conflict, and some cut off all contact with the mission. In North Kivu, the civilian Joint Protection Team members attended Protection Cluster meetings, but felt that their active participation was resisted and resented by many humanitarian actors.

In a September 2009 field report, Refugees International underscored this problem:

"The humanitarian agencies that lead and participate in the Protection Cluster have also failed to capitalize on the JPTs as a valuable information resource, despite the fact that they often go where humanitarian organizations do not have access. As cluster lead, UNHCR should ensure that the JPTs are given the opportunity to share relevant information within the framework of the Protection Cluster, and that the information gathered by the JPTs is distributed systematically throughout the wider humanitarian community. Although MONUC and humanitarian actors have different mandates and activities with respect to civilian protection, their work should be seen as mutually reinforcing. Their collaboration is critical."⁶⁸

the Red Cross; UN humanitarian agencies, organizations and funds; and humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The Humanitarians

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is the original humanitarian organization. ICRC is not an NGO or an intergovernmental body, but rather an entirely independent organization with an international mandate that is unique in the world. ICRC is the guardian of the *Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols* — the bedrock of international humanitarian law.⁶⁹ The *Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* also guide the work — to a greater or lesser degree — of other international humanitarian actors.⁷⁰ In particular, the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence are core to the work, and the self-perception of the humanitarian community, including many NGOs.⁷¹

UN Humanitarian Actors

A number of UN agencies, organizations and funds play a critical part in protection. Chief among these are the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP). Each has a mandate to facilitate particular elements of the humanitarian response, and typically work closely with

implementing partners — the NGOs — to carry out their programs in the field. These, and others, are coordinated through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

UNHCR has a mandate to protect refugees and to work with host governments and other governments around the world to find durable solutions to refugee crises. UNHCR is also the lead agency of the Protection Cluster at a global level, and in the field wherever the cluster system has been instituted. As such, UNHCR is often responsible for facilitating discussion and coordination among protection actors — civilian or uniformed — in the field.⁷²

Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

This is the broadest of the three categories by far, and encompasses everything from very small, local organizations, to large, international organizations. Only a very few NGOs have the resources to operate as independently as the ICRC does, and many large NGOs are implementing partners of the UN humanitarian agencies and governmental aid bodies. As such, they are intrinsically linked to the UN, and though they do not make up a part of the UN system, the implementation of UN humanitarian strategies and objectives depends heavily on their work.

The efficient distribution of humanitarian assistance and the layout of safe refugee camp sites are critical dimensions of overall protection. This Somali child lives in a makeshift shelter on the outskirts of the overflowing Dadab refugee camp in Kenya. (Kenya, February 2009.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir



Coordination and Cooperation

While people often characterize peacekeepers and humanitarians as having the same goals, the truth is that these two communities have very different, albeit complimentary, roles to play in protection, as well as the wider stabilization of humanitarian crises. Nevertheless, there is often a great deal of tension between peacekeepers and their humanitarian counterparts in the field.

For reasons of security and of principle, humanitarian agencies deliver their services according to short-term need, and without reference to political expediency. They need to remain as impartial and independent as possible from the political peacebuilding calculations of peacekeeping operations. Peacekeepers necessarily take a long-term view of their objectives, seeking durable stabilization and security, a deeply political enterprise.

In spite of these differences, however, the work of peacekeepers and humanitarians is closely interrelated, particularly where protection is concerned. Peacekeepers often provide security in order to enable the free flow of humanitarian assistance, as well as direct logistical and security assistance to humanitarian agencies that ask them for it. Conversely, peacekeepers often incorporate guidance from humanitarian groups when analyzing vulnerabilities and deciding how best to employ scarce protection resources.

During the crises of the mid-1990s it became clear that there was a need for cooperation between peacekeepers and humanitarian actors in order to maximize the impact of the UN community as a whole, and prevent these two important protection actors from working at cross purposes.

The concept of an “integrated mission” was designed to address this need for coordination. There are a number of integrated missions in the field today, and each takes a slightly different shape, according to the circumstances, but broadly, this concept incorporates a humanitarian coordinator (HC) into the mission at the level of a Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General (DSRSG). The DSRSG/HC

is responsible for coordinating the work of the UN humanitarian agencies (and, by extension, their implementing agencies) and ensuring that the humanitarian and peacebuilding activities are mutually reinforcing or — at a minimum — not in conflict.⁷³

Still, tensions remain. The DSRSG/HC is often viewed by humanitarian actors as a mission insider prioritizing peacekeeping objectives. Peacekeepers often complain that humanitarian actors remain entirely critical and disengaged from the mission until they need something — evacuation or logistical help for example. On both sides there is a need for greater patience, and a willingness to recognize that they do, in fact, serve very different ends, but that coherent protection strategies demand ongoing dialogue and coordination between these two critical actors.

Recommendations

Global Dialogue: While certain structures are in place to facilitate cooperation and coordination, in practice there is still a great deal of tension between peacekeepers and humanitarian actors. In order to resolve this tension, especially when it comes to protection of civilians, the OCHA/DPKO study rightly recommends, “*OCHA should initiate a policy discussion at the global level among relevant bodies... on proactive approaches to working with peacekeepers.*”⁷⁴

Cooperation: The Secretary General and the Security Council should hold senior mission leadership — in particular the DSRSG/HC, OCHA field leadership, and the Protection Cluster lead where applicable — responsible for ensuring constructive and ongoing engagement between the peacekeepers and the humanitarian community. In order to ensure that protection is addressed in a comprehensive way, agreements should be made at the earliest stages on the content and method of information-sharing between the humanitarian community and the peacekeepers. In addition, mechanisms must be established for joint protection planning and ongoing revision and analysis of protection strategies.⁷⁵

Peacekeepers and humanitarians...have very different, albeit complimentary, roles to play in protection, as well as the wider stabilization of humanitarian crises.

<p style="text-align: center;">By ensuring that peacekeepers have strong, clear mandates, and the necessary guidance, tools and training, the UN and its member states can substantially improve the performance of peacekeeping operations.</p>	<p>CONCLUSION: THE U.S. CAN MAKE PROTECTION A REALITY</p> <p>In the past year, the UN Secretariat — including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — have taken great strides in identifying the critical reforms needed in order to translate protection promises into reality. However, the UN Secretariat is just the implementer of the policies and initiatives taken by their political masters, the UN member states. Real reform will only be possible if those nations make a real commitment to drive forward these much needed reforms.</p> <p>In recent years, civilian protection crises in places like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have prompted members of the U.S. Administration and Congress to speak out forcefully about the injustice of ongoing violence against civilians. They routinely stress the importance of strong, effective peacekeeping operations. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the U.S. has a key role to play in the promotion of the reforms outlined in this report.</p> <p>While we applaud the renewed commitment of the U.S. to pay its assessed share of UN peacekeeping dues in full and on time, it is not enough to simply pay other countries to do the job. The U.S. government must use its position on the UN Security Council to support the crafting of strong, clear mandates with achievable objectives. The U.S. must also provide ongoing political support to peacekeeping operations by supporting relevant peace agreements, as well as the proactive use of force in order to protect civilians under imminent threat of violence.</p> <p>As a major international trainer of peacekeepers, the U.S. government can also ensure that its Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) training modules are modified as UN guidance changes — particularly with regards to the development of training</p> <p>related to protection tasks. They should work with global training partners to ensure that international peacekeeper training reflects the highest standards of quality and consistency.</p> <p>The U.S. is also in a position to offer more direct support and leadership to peacekeeping missions and the protection of vulnerable civilians. The provision of specialized equipment — such as helicopters, appropriate armored vehicles and intelligence gathering equipment — would make it possible for peacekeepers to better identify and pre-empt threats against civilians, respond more quickly to violent attacks, and maximize the use of scarce resources in the field.</p> <p>Furthermore, the U.S. should contribute advanced military expertise in the form of Staff Officers, medical and engineering units, and lift-and-sustain capabilities. These contributions would allow new peacekeeping missions to deploy more quickly and enable existing missions to operate more effectively.</p> <p>At the end of the day, the responsibility for civilian protection lies with the sovereign government in the country in question. By partnering with host governments and coordinating with like-minded donors, the U.S. should provide financial and technical support to security sector reform efforts. By strengthening the security and judicial institutions (military, police, courts and overall rule of law) in countries recovering from conflict, the U.S. can help create sustainable security and conditions conducive to the responsible withdrawal of peacekeeping forces.</p> <p>Multidimensional peacekeeping is a concept that has evolved to resolve the many interrelated issues associated with modern conflict. The addition of “imminent threat” language to peacekeeping mandates has been a critical evolution in international peacekeeping mandates, as protection has the dual effect of keeping people safe in the short-term and building the legitimacy of peacekeepers to</p>
<p>25</p>	<p>THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE: HOW PEACEKEEPERS CAN BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS</p>

meet long-term stabilization and peacebuilding objectives. But protection is conceptually difficult, resource intensive, and politically delicate. By ensuring that peacekeepers have strong, clear mandates, and the necessary guidance, tools and training, the

UN and its member states can substantially improve the performance of peacekeeping operations. More importantly, they will help ensure that civilians are protected from abuse, displacement, and death in some of the world's most dangerous places.

Darfurian refugee women walk through a barren refugee camp near Guereda in eastern Chad. (Chad, June 2008.)

Credit: Refugees International/Erin Weir



LIST OF ACRONYMS

CNDP	<i>Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple</i> (National Congress for the Defense of the People)
ConOps	Concept of Operations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
EUFOR	European Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
GPOI	Global Peace Operations Initiative
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced People
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JPT	Joint Protection Team
MINURCAT	<i>Mission des Nations Unies en République Centrafricaine et au Tchad</i> (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad)
MOB	Mobile Operating Base
MONUC	<i>Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo</i> (United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SAF	Sudan Alliance Forces
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
TOB	Temporary Operating Base
UNAMID	African Union/ United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
WFP	World Food Program

ENDNOTES

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- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.
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- ³⁵ Please see section entitled “What is ‘Protection?’”, pp. 6-7.
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- ³⁷ Refugees International interview, Khartoum, November 2008.

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- ⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.
- ⁴³ UN DPKO, *New Horizon*, p. 6.
- ⁴⁴ Holt et al., *Protecting Civilians*, p. 78.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 109, 136 & 141.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- ⁴⁸ Some doctrine has been developed that takes account of civilian security in urban war-fighting contexts, and specifically in the context of “counterinsurgency” strategies. However, this has not yet been effectively translated for peacekeeping purposes.
- ⁴⁹ “Many interviewed officers... agreed... it was their duty and purpose to provide some security. Their caution was less a question of personal willingness to act, and more an issue of not understanding what civilian protection meant for them... in the context of a UN peacekeeping mission. For most, issues involved aspects of strategy, authority, capacity, knowledge, leadership, and support to achieve these goals.” Holt et al., *Protecting Civilians*, p. 200.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.
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- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 202.
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- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 201.
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- ⁵⁶ Holt et al., *Protecting Civilians*, p. 202.
- ⁵⁷ Rope strung across a road is a rudimentary, but common type of roadblock in peacekeeping contexts.
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A local boy wanders outside of his home in Ntoto, North Kivu province. This area remains volatile, but roughly 450 families who had fled the area due to fighting returned when the UN peacekeepers established a base nearby. (DR Congo, October 2009)

Credit: Jiro Ose

REFUGEES  INTERNATIONAL

A POWERFUL VOICE FOR LIFESAVING ACTION