

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 10-12, 2001, a seminar was organized jointly by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence (Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre), focussing on the role international military forces might play in dealing with serious insecurity in and around refugee camp environments. The seminar was intended to complement an earlier workshop which had been hosted by the Government of Canada concerning the role which could be played by international police in these same contexts.¹

Building on experiences in the field, and following discussions in the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly over the last several years, both meetings had the objective of identifying practical strategies for dealing with incidences of insecurity in refugee camps. In these instances, host governments, who bear primary responsibility for ensuring the physical safety of refugees, may require the support of the international community to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of camps on their territory. Addressing insecurity in refugee camps, particularly the presence of armed elements, can have important implications for regional stability and for the safety and security of civilians in and around those environments, including humanitarian workers assisting them. This has been evident in several high profile cases, including most recently in West Timor, Guinea and Tanzania. While some in the humanitarian and academic

community have hypothesized about the types of activities that might be undertaken by external police or military actors, the Ottawa and Oxford meetings were an attempt to explore untested assumptions, and identify the implications and requirements of such engagement.

The July 10-12, 2001 seminar was held at Eynsham Hall, in the UK, and brought together representatives from troop contributing countries with military and police peacekeeping experience and national refugee camp protection responsibilities, international development specialists, diplomats and legal experts, and practitioners from UN humanitarian organizations, the Red Cross movement, and the NGO community. Utilizing case studies and other relevant experience, participants focussed on situations of serious insecurity, where the presence of international military forces might be employed to assist humanitarian agencies and host governments responsible for camp management. Emphasis was placed on identifying circumstances under which such forces would be deployed and with what mandate and capacity.

Participants agreed that while the internal security of a refugee camp remains a function for the police, international military forces *could* under certain conditions use their resources to assist in the protection of the external security of a camp. In this context, participants suggested that in order for international military forces to be deployed to refugee camp situations, they would need a clear and enforceable mandate, a clearly defined concept of operations and rules of engagement. This may be arranged as part of UN authorized peace support operation implemented by the UN, a regional organization or coalition of the willing. It may also be negotiated bilaterally between a country hosting a refugee population and a troop contributing

¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Workshop on the Potential Role of International Police in Refugee Camp Security", report from the workshop of the same name hosted at the Government Conference Centre, March 22-23, 2000. See also <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreignp/human-rights/>