

extent by personnel in the Secretariat, including his Executive Office. Though the Secretary-General is sometimes informed by government representatives directly, the general flow of information on new developments is from the desk officer (who usually specializes in several countries in a given region) to the division head to the Under-Secretary-General and to the Secretary-General.

Several departments within the Secretariat currently have responsibilities for early warning, as do the various human rights bodies mentioned above. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has "primary responsibility" within the UN Secretariat for preventive action and peacemaking³⁵. This includes a mandate "to identify potential or actual conflicts in whose resolution the United Nations could play a useful role." The six regional divisions within DPA are each charged with identifying "potential crisis areas and providing *early warning* to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting peace and security."³⁶

The most ambitious and focused early warning system for conflict yet established in the UN is the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). It currently involves some 3-4 professional staff and a significant computerized capacity. The system incorporates a multitude of indicators and information sources (statistical and textual) to allow monitoring of deterioration in over 100 nations. However, the system has yet to produce a single "early warning," though it has been operational since July 1995. The efforts in the initial stages were deficient in that too much reliance was placed on statistics, computer databases and automated computations for pattern recognition and neural networks. In colloquial terms, the first efforts relied too much on a "black box" approach but a more "hands on" proactive approach is currently being taking, involving field trips and detailed reports.

It is generally recognized that, traditionally, different sections of the UN, as with many bureaucracies, lacked coordination and an effective information flow.³⁷ In order to address this problem within the Secretariat, a DHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination was developed after the creation of DHA in 1992. One goal is "joint analysis of early warning of a looming crisis, within a broader framework for the coordination of operational planning and implementation among the three departments." This includes "early warning information gathering and analysis, planning of preventive action, fact-finding, etc." Desk officers are to exchange "early warning signals, staff reports, internal meeting notes, maps, assessments, agency situation reports, etc."³⁸ An Interdepartmental committee meets regularly to facilitate this. It has also been stated that there is "agreement as to the responsibility and criteria for 'sounding the alarm' in impending crises."

On the larger, inter-agency level, an Ad Hoc Working Group of the Administrative