

Chapter 11 - Logistics and Training

Logistics and training are often the forgotten themes; logistics because it is seen as peripheral to the substantive tasks at hand; and training because it is often not thought of until a crisis presents itself. We can learn much from the Rwandan HRFOR experience. The logistics of that human rights operation (HRO) was so lacking as to dramatically impair the capacity of HRFOR, and at times make it a source of derision by other UN as well as non-UN personnel. The lack of training for HRFOR staff compounded the wide variation in individual ability, and gave rise to some serious mistakes by individual HRFOR personnel, tarnishing the whole HRO.

Both the logistics and training failures were eminently preventable, and other parts of the UN can provide examples on how to do better. In this chapter, the logistics section will briefly look at the administrative, communications, and logistics needs of human rights operations, and impediments within the UN system. The training section will focus on how to better prepare HRO members, as well as the many other UN field partners as elaborated in Chapter five.

11.1 Logistics and Administration

The debate over the issue of political will for HROs has been dealt with in several other parts of this study. That debate will not be revisited here except to note that adequate logistics and administration support, particularly in the field where costs and complexity rise exponentially, depends on finances. The financial ability to afford sufficient HRO logistics and administration is tightly linked to the political will of member states to provide such resources. Witness the situation of HRFOR where the High Commissioner for Human Rights was forced to solicit voluntary contributions, and the subsequent negative impact on HRFOR logistics and administrative support. However even assuming that member states provide sufficient resources, there are a number of other factors that need to be resolved.

Until recently all UN Secretariat field operations activities were expected to operate under the same administrative and operational rules as the rest of the UN Secretariat. These rules were devised for static headquarters style bureaucracies, and are not at all appropriate for dynamic field operations. Elsewhere in the UN specialized agencies such as UNHCR, which regularly mount large field operations, have varied their admin procedures to address the fundamental difference between field and 'headquarters'. Within the UN Secretariat structure, DPKO particularly in the last 5 years, has started to evolve a field support 'attitude' and capacity in response to the rising demands by troop contributing nations and their militaries in the field. The creation in April 1993 of a 7 day 24 hour DPKO Situation Centre, is one of the more