Private Security Providers and Humanitarians

To begin, it is important to define "private security". For the purpose of this paper, it refers to a spectrum of companies which have a distinct business nature with a permanent core staff and on-going marketing. Their range of services, their clientele, and their ability to operate internationally vary from firm to firm. They make up a booming industry both domestically and internationally, yet are but bit players in a much larger trend towards privatization of social and economic activity in states. In this way, the neo-liberal restructuring of state activity is also increasingly seen in the trend for states to rely on NGOs to provide international assistance.[9] James Fennell, a former CARE UK worker and now an advisor for Defense Systems Limited (DSL), recognizes this shared lineage: "The increasing role of commercial security companies may be viewed in a similar vein to the increased policy and technical input of NGOs over the past two decades to the provision of official relief and development assistance to Southern nations".[10] Certainly, it would have been surprising if the changing role of government in the developed world, manifest in the privatization of welfare and security in the domestic sphere, had not somehow permeated foreign policy.[11]

The scope of activities performed by private security providers to the benefit of humanitarians goes from soft (passive/protective) to hard (proactive/aggressive). Training is the activity nearest the soft pole. Depending on the nature of the humanitarian client, the benefits of security training have taken on increased importance for either practical or ethical reasons for post-Cold War humanitarian activities. On the practical side, despite the danger posed to humanitarians in weak and crumbling states, studies have shown that security-specific training has been the exception rather than the rule, particularly for NGOs.[12] Sean Greenaway and Andrew Harris found that only six percent of the humanitarians they surveyed reported no concerns with security, yet many NGOs, for example, do not have frameworks to assess risks or make contingency plans and much of their experience in security practices, techniques, and capabilities is garnered only from earlier operations.[13] On the ethical side, actors who wish to eschew robust responses for the sake of not compromising the humanitarian ethic favour training.[14] The ICRC, for instance, has an extensive array of developed and tested procedures and even has a simulation training site in Switzerland that resembles an Eastern European village. While in-house programmes such as this are elaborate and beyond the means of many humanitarians, there is nevertheless a growing marketplace for security training rooted in the

[9] Mark Duffield, "Famine, Conflict and the Internationalization of Public Welfare," in Martin Doornbos, Lionel Cliffe, Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, and John Marakis, eds. Beyond Conflict in the Horn: Prospects for Peace, Recovery and Development in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan (London: James Currey Ltd., 1992), p. 58.
[10] James Fennell, "Private Security Companies: the New Humanitarian Agent," presentation to the Conference on Interagency Co-ordination in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, 19 October 1999, Cranfield University/Royal Military College of Science Shrivenham, p. 5.
[11] Mark Duffield, "NGO relief in war zones: Towards an analysis of the new aid paradigm," Third World Quarterly 18 (No. 3, 1997).
[12] Greenaway and Harris, "Humanitarian Security," p. 11.
[13] Ibid., p. 2, p. 11.
[14] Yves Sandoz, "Private Security and International Law," in Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason, eds.,