

must be noted that this must be undertaken with extreme caution as some refugees will be afraid to deal with any military while others may believe that the humanitarian assistance is being given for political reasons. No matter how well intentioned, it will be very difficult to maintain the impartial and neutral nature of the camps if soldiers are providing direct humanitarian assistance.

Although not exactly comparable to refugee camp protection, some lessons for camp security might be drawn from the United Nations Guards Contingent in Iraq, a programme currently operating in three northern provinces of that country. Among the main functions of the program are to provide security and escort services for humanitarian goods and staff, collect security information, and coordinate UN and NGO activities and travel routes. It also provides security briefings and guidelines to UN staff.

II. SECURITY CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES

There are a number of specific challenges to providing security in refugee camps, not all of which are in the ambit of responsibility of international police, although they may affect their efforts. During the course of the workshop, participants discussed a number of strategies for addressing these challenges, including:

- **The need for a political settlement** to end the conflict and resolve the root causes that precipitated a refugee movement. The peace and security of the region in which refugee camps are located is an overriding factor in the security of the camps themselves. Camp workers and residents need assurances from political actors that steps are being taken to work in conjunction with the conflicting parties to bring about a resolution.
- A recognition of the importance of **locating refugee camps at a safe distance from contested borders** as soon as possible **and ensuring their size is kept to a manageable level**, in accordance with international standards. Participants reinforced the need to encourage host states to allow camps to be established at a safe distance from contested borders and proposed that strategically positioned food distribution points would facilitate the settlement of refugees to desired locations.
- Ensuring appropriate attention is given to **camp layout and design**, so as to reduce vulnerability to internal and external threats.⁵ Proposals included involving refugees in decision-making and encouraging families and community groups to organize neighborhood watch efforts (see below). It was noted that UNHCR already considers these concerns in camp planning. International police may be able to offer additional security advice in the design and layout of camps.
- **Taking account of local cultures and prevailing conditions** in the development of security plans, including the capacities and resources available to local authorities. It was felt that learning in this area would be greatly facilitated by the deployment of multi-

⁵For a more thorough discussion of internal and external threats see Karen Jacobsen, "Briefing Paper on Threats in Refugee Populated Areas" prepared for a workshop in Physical Security and the Protection of Refugee Populated Areas, 29-30 October, 1999.