

peace-keepers to patrol better at night) and various types of sensors and detectors (such a ground sensors and radar to spot moving vehicles and persons). The NATO forces which took over from the UN in the former Yugoslavia had these, illustrating how, by NATO standards, the UN is mal-equipped. Historically, in many of the UN's field operations, the most advanced observation device employed was the human eyeball, sometimes aided by binoculars.

Even still, information gained by advanced observation technologies (satellite, aerial or on-site) may not be enough to reveal the hidden intentions of leaders. Often the only people to know about a planned escalation of conflict are the plotters and their associates. In the past, some "insiders" have sought to warn the UN, placing themselves at great risk. For instance, in Rwanda in early 1994, several months before the world witnessed the worst case of genocide since World War II, the UN peace-keeping force stationed there (UNAMIR) received information from a Rwandan military officer that a group of high-ranking Hutus within the government were planning the mass slaughter of Tutsis. The UN Force Commander, Romeo Dallaire of Canada, requested permission from UN headquarters to provide asylum to the informer. Having no system to handle asylum seekers, headquarters turned down the request. The macabre plot was not uncovered until well after the systematic killings had escalated beyond control. A key element in the extremists' plot was to force Belgian peace-keepers to leave the country at the outset of the slaughter, since they were the best equipped peace-keepers in the country and the only ones remotely capable of putting a stop to the spread of genocide. So Rwandan government forces confronted a group of Belgian paratroopers and requested them to lay down their arms. Not knowing of the plot, the peace-keepers innocently complied, only to be slaughtered. An outraged Belgium withdrew the rest of its peace-keepers shortly thereafter, just as the coup plotters had desired. During the subsequent fighting, the unprepared UN Force Commander complained about being "deaf and blind" in the field. This story shows that more and better information is necessary at an early stage and that a mechanism should be developed to grant rapid asylum to those who put their lives at risk when they have vital information relating to keeping the peace.

Obtaining information directly from locals who observe or are affected by menacing developments is a key to early warning. Electronic mail, available through the Internet, has the potential for easier, cheaper, more rapid and widespread communication between individuals and the UN. The UN has already established a 24-hour human rights "fax hotline" in Geneva to receive complaints from individuals. By providing an e-mail address for receipt of similar information, the UN should receive even more warnings and vital information. While e-mail (and, indeed, long distance calling/faxing) may not yet be available to many potential "warners" in third world countries, it's availability is bound to increase in coming years. With both the