

Discussion

An important impediment to protection of civilians during UN missions was thought to lie with mission mandates. It was stated that individual nations have an aversion to Chapter 7 mandates because they fear losing troops and the higher cost often associated with these missions. Another problem was attributed to complicated mandates, which are not readily understood by troops on the ground. Complex mandates may be politically useful, but they must be translated into something that is clearly understandable for the UN commander on the ground.

This idea sparked several comments regarding the role of rules of engagement in UN operations. It was explained that each force has its own, national, rules of engagement that it must adhere to. The fact that UN missions are multinational leads to obvious problems. Developing a unified system of rules of engagement for all UN missions was deemed to be inappropriate due to the fact that each UN mission is unique. However, it was brought to the group's attention that countries that train together generally have similar or complementary rules of engagement, which may help to nullify this problem in an actual conflict situation.

Another impediment arose from the lack of appropriate doctrine for protecting civilians. One participant noted that protection of civilians was not formerly a military priority and that there was a considerable void in doctrine, tactics and training for such missions. Another participant spoke of how soldiers have twisted the rules of engagement in order to intervene on behalf of civilians in danger. Several instances of troops protecting civilians were cited, but these arose from troops taking personal initiatives rather than following specific guidelines for commanders and troops. There was evidence of widespread support in the workshop for further research and development of new military doctrine for protecting civilians.

Many participants were aware of the UN Security Council's increasing willingness to include protection of civilians in four recent mandates. While there is broad support for the new emphasis, workshop participants expressed some related concerns about vague mission mandates, inadequate rules of engagement, lack of standard operating procedures, questionable mission planning processes, and problems securing contributors who competent and were well-prepared for the assigned task.