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From:
Sent: 12 September 2006 07:52
To: Sue Owen
Cc: Michael Anderson; Martin Dinham;
Mark Lowcock; Nemat Shafik; Liz Davis;
PSSUMA
Subject: RE: RESTRICTED; Security Committee Paper TOR

Sue

Thanks to you / Martin for the opportunity to comment. A few thoughts from the Iraq team:

a) I am unclear how this paper fits into the work that FCO is taking forward on both Iraq and Afghanistan, operationally, and in terms of the SLA, in terms of the services we buy from FCO? On Iraq we need to be in lock-step with the FCO on security issues; both at post and in London - with FCO/SMD and senior management.

b) 'Duty of Care' - this term seems to have done the rounds and is now coming back into use. In my PCRU life we were asked by HR not to use this term, as it had no legal bearing. Are we now using it again? Regardless, 'Duty of Care' is, to me, about the standard of care that we offer. I think what would be useful to teams across DFID is guidance on the standard of care and the general principles to adhere to. I wonder whether it would be preferable to talk about 'Minimum Security Standards'?

I am aware of a number of different security training 'initiaives' in DFID over the past few years, many of which have operated to different standards. Standardising our policies and procedures in this area would, to some degree, help us avoid duplication, gaps and sending out confused messages to external partners. Do we need one contracted agent for (Iraq-type) security training, for example?

c) Re post-incident reporting - I am unclear as to why we are focusing on this per se. Incident reporting is helpful, and we need to be clear who needs to know what / when, etc, but this is only part of the security management conundrum. But we also need a set of guidelines set within a management framework that can be adapted according to the context, hopefully pre-emptively. Security is not a fixed star. It is a dynamic process and therefore our response should flex accordingly. We need to invest - early - in security management / training and the physical aspects of the security infrastructure, rather than get caught in a purely reactive cycle. We should also consider what sort of thresholds we are establishing to set in train more root and branch reviews of post security arrangements - individual incidents v trends, etc. This may need to be determined context by context.

d) Having standard operating procedures for security management would seem an obvious output. Working closely with CHAD OT in the late 90s and early 00s (mainly Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan), we determined that SOPs were an essential management tool. But staff also need to be trained on them (regularly). Again, SOPs need to be rooted in a clear and robust management system.

e) on iii) - this is where general statements and practicalities clash. In Iraq there is no real alternative but for DFID-funded consultants to fit within the HMG security framework (FCO-led). Essentially therefore we all work to the same standard, although it is described differently (depending largely on contract status). Do we also need to start assessing security arrangements for NGOs in certain contexts? In Afghanistan in 2001-2, we provided support to NGOs to enhance their security arrangements as part of our grants. Although we may not be directly responsible for NGOs, the repercussions of an incident involving a DFID-funded NGO could impact on DFID's reputation, as well as the overall operation (look at SCUK in Darfur; the humanitarian community lost a partner of 20 years+ experience of the region when SCUK pulled out of Darfur after 2 SCUK colleagues were tragically killed by a landmine in 2003).

f) An obvious point - we will never eliminate risks; we can only try and manage them. Therefore we need to be prepared for the unexpected and be prepared to act early; prevention is better than cure, so to speak. Do we have the right systems and skills for this - both organisationally and at a personal level? This also implies good and effective coordination at post - Post Security Committees and effective post Security Managers, etc (again, all part of the SLA framework) and effective coordination with FCO/SMD too (does an excellent job on this for MENAD). It also means we need to have robust pre-deployment training

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(including medical clearance, training, briefing, issuing of equipment, insurance/cover etc.) as well as reliable security infrastructure and procedures both in UK and in-country (in which staff have the utmost confidence), coupled with the medical (physical & psychological) support and procedures in place for staff both during and post-deployment to help them deal with the rigours of the environment.

g) Different Depts may not always agree on the trade-off between the risks and having staff at certain posts. This depends on what is trying to be achieved - development / humanitarian assistance / something else ('Hearts and minds', anyone?). The 'something else' is increasingly looming large on our radar - partly because time and again we are getting called upon to assist, but also as these initiatives inevitably go forward under military auspices, the development and military communities become compressed, especially in the minds of beneficiaries and, significantly, 'others' - whether this is in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere (e.g. the imaginatively titled CJTF-HOA, operating out of Djibouti). Our world suddenly seems a lot smaller. We would echo the point Lindy makes about the challenge of establishing the threshold beyond which we can no longer operate and beyond which the risk/effectiveness trade-off means it no longer makes sense to continue DFID operations. How to choose the criteria and the benchmarks against which we draw down staff in Iraq - or evacuate completely - has been raised on more than one occasion on the Iraq team. The number of variables is so great, that to set specific benchmarks is difficult. The danger in operating without them though is that we become increasingly tolerant of a situation which some might feel has evolved beyond the level of risk we should accept. Our view is that the particulars of any criteria we set probably need to be assessed at country level or at sub unit level (e.g. Basra/Baghdad) so that they fit the context, but broad guidelines on how to approach this assessment would be very useful to have centrally.

I hope this helps. My thanks to [redacted] for her insightful contributions.

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