
ARMED ESCORTS FOR HUMANITARIAN CONVOYS: TO USE OR NOT TO USE?

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IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys

Overriding Principle:

Armed escorts for humanitarian convoys should be used only as a **“last resort”**, in exceptional circumstances, and when the established criteria are fulfilled.

- Originally endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in September 2001.
- Revised by IASC Task Force on Humanitarian Space and Civil-Military Relations and currently pending endorsement by IASC Principles this month.

Changing Nature of Crises & Increasing Complexity

- Global War on Terror and related legislation
- Increasingly integrated international interventions in fragile and conflicted states
- Stabilization strategies
- Increase in natural disaster in complex security environments
- Deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers
- Violent crime

If and When to Use Armed Escorts

General Rule: Humanitarian Convoys will not use armed escorts

An exception to the rule will be considered as a last resort, only when all of the following criteria are met:

1. Humanitarian Need and Program Criticality
2. Responsible Authorities
3. Safety and Security
4. Sustainability



Before deciding on such exceptions, the potential consequences and alternatives to armed escorts must be considered.....

Potential Consequences – Armed Escorts

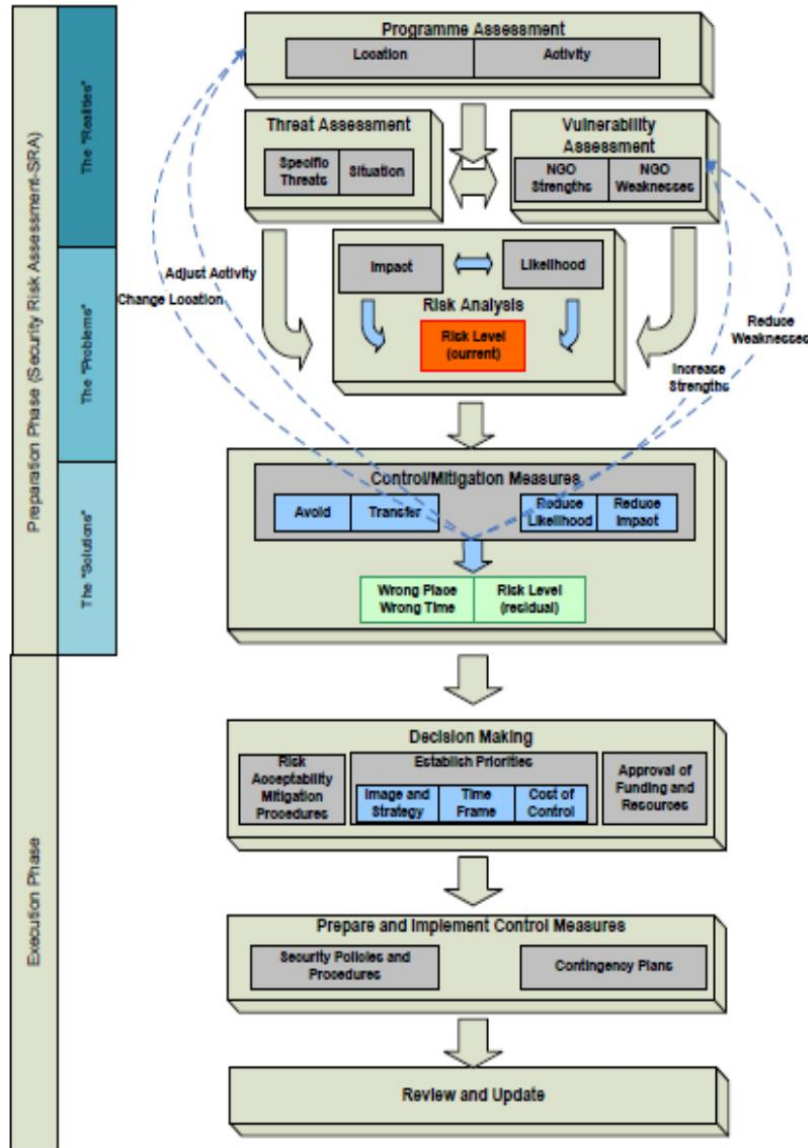
- Cooperation with an armed actor can undermine actual and perceived neutrality, impartiality and independence of the organization or humanitarian community.
- Cooperation with an armed actor can increase convoy vulnerability to attack by opposing forces
- The use of armed escorts by one humanitarian actor can negatively affect the security of others that do not use them.
- Dependence on an armed actor can make it extremely difficult to operate without such force in the future, undermining sustainability
- Cooperation with one armed actor can make it impossible or unsafe to operate in territory controlled by another armed actor.

Alternatives to Armed Escorts

- Cultivate Greater Acceptance for presence & work.
- Humanitarian Negotiations
 - De-confliction arrangement
 - Humanitarian Pause
 - Humanitarian Corridors
 - Days of Tranquility
- Remote Management

- Low-profile Approach
- Area Security
- Innovative Program Design
- Suspend or Cease Operations


Security Risk Management (SRM)



Graph 1 – The Security Risk Management model

- ✓ Program Assessment
- ✓ Threat Assessment
- ✓ Vulnerability Assessment
- ✓ Risk Analysis – Impact & Likelihood
- ✓ Security Risk Management Recommendations & Decisions
- ✓ Implementation
- ✓ Review and Update

Guiding Principles

- **Primacy of Humanitarian Criteria:** decisions to request/accept armed escorts must be made by humanitarian organizations based on humanitarian criteria
 - **Humanitarian Identity :** humanitarian convoys must retain their civilian nature & character
 - **Primacy of Humanitarian Organizations in Humanitarian Work:** military can support humanitarian work by creating a secure environment and by providing logistical support when requested.
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If You Do It, Do It Well: Use of Armed Escorts

- **Be Selective.**

Consider carefully who is the most appropriate provider for the armed escort. Consider reputation, capabilities, and rules of engagement. Is the force a party to the conflict? Have they committed violations or abuses?

- **Negotiate Wisely.**

Where multiple organizations are operating in the same area and intend to make use of armed escorts, ideally a single team should negotiate escort arrangements such as how the costs of the escort are addressed, & liabilities.

- **Establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

When and where possible, the humanitarian community should have common procedures regarding the use of armed escorts.

- **Stop Successfully**

Establish an exit strategy from the onset. When deciding to use an armed escort, a specific time frame, location and purpose of the escort should be determined
