

CHAPTER IV

Security Management

Section P

IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (IEDS)



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Revision: September 2021

In September 2021, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) approved an update to the policy on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The update, which was largely technical, clarified an issue on third party contractors engaged in the removal of “operational IEDs” as the previous version of the policy was not clear on the role they could play or how a peacekeeping mission could support. The revised policy document, which was drafted with the support of humanitarian policy experts and the Office of Legal Affairs, clarifies that support to third party contractors by a mission component for mandated activities is not considered direct engagement, support or funding of those IED-related activities. This was done via the addition of a new footnote, which is highlighted in yellow.

Additional changes were also made to align the language with recent policy revisions, such as the revised Framework of Accountability. These changes are not highlighted, as they are technical in nature.

A. Introduction

1. The use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) has increased by threat actors in many areas where the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) organizations¹ have operations. UNSMS organizations have been the target of IEDs, including Person-Borne and Vehicle-Borne IEDs to devastating effect, and it can be expected that organizations will be targeted again by such weapons. An IED is a uniquely dangerous weapon due to its versatility, adaptability and method of employment.
2. UNSMS organizations are required to implement programmes and activities in areas where IEDs are currently employed or may be employed in the future, including where IEDs deliberately or indirectly threaten UNSMS organizations' personnel, premises, assets and operations. Some UNSMS organizations have been requested to engage in the removal of IEDs still operational with little policy guidance about the security risks this might entail. For these reasons, there is a clear need for a policy on the UNSMS approach to managing the security risk posed by IEDs².

B. Purpose

3. The purpose of this policy is to outline the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) approach to managing the security risk posed by IEDs that directly or indirectly threaten UNSMS personnel, premises, assets or operations and to delineate the roles, responsibilities and limitations within the UNSMS for the management of these security risks³.

C. Application/Scope

4. This policy is applicable to all UNSMS organization and their personnel as covered in *Security Policy Manual* (SPM), Chapter III, "Applicability of Security Arrangements" (herein "UNSMS personnel"). This policy does not apply to military contingents or formed police units in United Nations Missions.
5. The scope of this policy is confined to IEDs that directly or indirectly threaten UNSMS personnel, premises, assets or operations. This policy does not address the United Nations' approach to, and management of, the effect of IEDs on others, including civilian populations.
6. Details on specific IED security risk management measures and related technical procedures will be covered in separate UNSMS standards and procedures.

¹ The UNSMS comprises all United Nations system organizations (major organizational units of the Secretariat which have heads officially accountable to the Secretary-General, other bodies subsidiary or related to the United Nations, such as the United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes) and other international organizations that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations for the purposes of security.

² On 13 July 2010, the Secretary-General's Policy Committee decided that "DSS will, in consultation with DPKO, DPA and all other relevant UN agencies, coordinate and facilitate the development of a comprehensive policy on the UN's approach to Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) that are part of active hostilities and target UN personnel and facilities."

³ Please refer to *Security Policy Manual*, Chapter IV, Section A, "Policy on Security Risk Management".

D. IED Definitions

7. For the purposes of this policy, an IED is defined as an explosive device fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic or incendiary chemicals and designed to kill, injure, damage, harass or distract. IEDs are often made from commercially available products and/or military munitions, are simple in design and are usually cheap in labour and cost to produce.
8. IEDs are highly versatile weapons due to the multiple methods available for their construction, delivery and initiation. This versatility allows them to be rapidly adapted to achieve different effects against varying targets, defeat the tactics and countermeasures employed by opponents and/or changes in the supply of raw material for their construction. The versatility and adaptability of IEDs, combined with their simplicity and low cost in manufacture, have made them a preferred weapon choice of certain threat actors who have used them to either attack larger and better equipped security forces (often with an indiscriminate impact on the civilian population) or to target civilians directly (including the United Nations).
9. UNSMS organizations working in complex threat environments have long been confronted with various types of weapons, including explosive weapons. In most cases, the United Nations has dealt with explosive weapons that were abandoned or unexploded ordnance, including “explosive remnants of war” (ERW) that have ceased to have value for those who deployed them. However, explosive weapons, including IEDs, that are not remnants are considered “operational” (see below) and of some value to those who deploy or use them.

E. Remnant and Operational IEDs

10. For the purpose of this policy, IEDs are categorized as either a “Remnant IED” or an “Operational IED”.
11. For the purpose of this policy, a “Remnant IED” is defined as an IED that has been declared so through the official procedures governing such decisions within the United Nations system, involving the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, in consultation with the United Nations Country Team and mine-action advice, if necessary. Such decision-making processes will consider the political, humanitarian, legal and other issues of the context in which the IEDs are found.
12. For the purpose of this policy, an “Operational IED” is defined as an IED that has **not** been officially declared a Remnant IED by the process described in paragraph 11 above. If there is any doubt as to whether an IED has been officially declared a Remnant IED, it shall be assumed to be an Operational IED by default.
13. Various United Nations entities have a mandate and clear policies and guidelines for dealing with explosive remnants, for example the International Mine Action Standards

(IMAS) that include safety principles for dealing with these explosive hazards⁴. These safety principles, as well as advice from mine action advisers, are the basis of the United Nations strategy for lowering the risk posed by Remnant IEDs.

F. Managing the Security Risk posed by IEDs

14. IEDs can create a significant safety and security risk for UNSMS organizations if not addressed. The security risk posed by IEDs that deliberately or indirectly threaten UNSMS personnel, premises, assets or operations will be managed through the Security Risk Management policy⁵ and manual. The UNSMS strategy for managing the security risk from IED threats is one of both **prevention** and **mitigation**, and can include any prevention and/or mitigation measure except activities prohibited in paragraph 16 below.
15. **Prevention** entails physical, procedural and training measures intended to lower the likelihood of an IED incident occurring and affecting a UNSMS organization(s). Prevention measures available to UNSMS organizations include, but are not limited to, information exchange and management, travel planning, security awareness programmes and electronic countermeasures. **Mitigation** entails physical, procedural and training measures intended to lower the impact of an IED incident once it has occurred. Mitigation measures available to UNSMS organizations include, but are not limited to, defensive measures such as blast/ballistic protection and stand-off distance and crisis response plans and preparations for rapid medical attention. Required IED security risk management measures (SRMM) will be an output of the SRM process.
16. UNSMS organizations and their personnel covered by the provisions of this policy, as laid out in paragraph 4 above, cannot directly engage in, support or fund activities primarily meant to disarm, remove or destroy an Operational IED⁶. This provision is founded on the understanding that interference with the active weapons systems of threat actors may create the intention and perceived justification for violent action against UNSMS organizations and their personnel. This provision is further reinforced in situations of armed conflict by the humanitarian principle of neutrality, as enshrined in international humanitarian law and other provisions of international law. This policy should not preclude UNSMS personnel from conducting capacity development of national security authorities for the protection of civilians.
17. Nothing in this policy is meant to contravene the provisions of the United Nations “Use of Force Policy” (see *Security Policy Manual* (SPM), Chapter IV, Section H) as it may apply to defensive actions that may be deemed necessary in emergency situations meant to negate an imminent threat to UNSMS personnel, premises, assets and/or operations from an Operational IED.

⁴ See, for example, IMAS 10.10 – 10.70, “Mine Action Safety and Occupational Health” at <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/international-standards/imas-in-english/list-of-imas/>.

⁵ Please refer to the *Security Policy Manual*, Chapter VI, Section A on “Security Risk Management” and the *Security Risk Management Manual*.

⁶ In relation to paragraph 4 above, any activities of the UN Mission force or police component(s), including related to Operational IEDs, is not covered by the provisions of this Policy. Further, administration support (financial, procurement, etc.) by a mission component for these mandated-activities is **not** considered **direct** engagement, support or funding of those IED-related activities, and therefore are **not** prohibited by the provisions of this policy.

18. The primary responsibility for the management of IEDs, especially Operational IEDs, rests with the host Government or any other authority in control, including occupying powers or foreign forces operating in support of the authorities. Managing the security risk from Operational IEDs that directly target UNSMS organizations may require the assistance of the host country, United Nations peacekeeping mission and police/military assets, and/or other international military/police forces, including to engage in activities prohibited to UNSMS personnel as per paragraph 16 above.
19. If after prevention and mitigation measures are implemented the residual security risk from IEDs is deemed unacceptable,⁷ then the only option is to avoid the risk by temporarily removing UNSMS personnel from the threat as per *Security Policy Manual* (SPM), Chapter IV, Section D (“Relocation, Evacuation and Alternate Work Modalities – Measures to Avoid Risk”).

G. Roles and Responsibilities

20. In the management of the security risks posed by IEDs, officials of the UNSMS in-country, including the Designated Official (DO), members of the Security Management Team, and UNSMS Security Personnel, must fulfil their responsibilities as per the Framework of Accountability⁸ for security and all other existing security management policies, including those governing Security Risk Management, with special reference to Section F above.
21. DOs have special responsibility to liaise with host country or other applicable authorities in relation to IEDs on behalf of the UNSMS and to consult, as necessary, with the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security in implementing a workable IED security risk management plan.
22. Heads of UNSMS organizations are responsible for informing their respective personnel of the threats and risks posed by IEDs and for properly implementing the Security Risk Management measures included in this policy (and approved by the DO) to lower the risk to their personnel, premises, assets and operations.
23. DOs and heads of UNSMS organizations are to ensure that appropriate financial resources are forecasted and allocated to implement the approved IED security risk management measures.
24. UNSMS Security Personnel shall advise on whether all required and approved IED security risk measures and procedures are in place and effective, including, but not limited to, physical protection, access control, training, contingency/crisis plans and information management and analysis.
25. All UNSMS personnel shall be familiar with and abide by all UNSMS IED risk management measures and procedures established in-country. Personnel covered by the provisions of this policy have a special responsibility to refrain from any activities outlined in paragraph 16 above and to report to their respective headquarters any attempts to force or persuade them to do so.

H. Enforcement

⁷ See *Security Policy Manual*, Chapter IV, Section A. “Security Risk Management”.

⁸ See *Security Policy Manual*, Chapter II, Section A, “Framework of Accountability”.

26. In the event of an investigation into an IED-related incident, findings that any UNSMS personnel failed to abide by the terms of this policy may lead to administrative or disciplinary proceedings.

I. Final Provisions

27. This policy is meant to be made available to all UNSMS personnel.

28. This policy enters into effect on 8 November 2012, with revisions made in September 2021.