

## Chapter 11

# Health, Safety and Security

*Miles Martin*

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*Miles Martin* served ten years as an officer in the British Army before leaving in 1996 as a captain. During this time he trained as a combat survival instructor with the Special Air Service (SAS) and conducted operational tours in Northern Ireland, the first Gulf War and in Bosnia. He has been an election observer for the OSCE and the EU and a member of the core team responsible for logistics and security on seventeen missions. In 2000 Miles moved to Norway to be with his Norwegian wife, and worked for four years as Security Coordinator for the Norwegian Refugee Council, regularly briefing NORDEM staff prior to assignments. He is currently a security manager for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

# 1. Introduction

This chapter is designed as an introduction to health, safety, security and other practical issues that you should consider when being deployed by NORDEM. It intends to highlight these issues early in your recruitment process, allowing you time to give them some thought prior to accepting an assignment, and to make appropriate preparations prior to departure. It is also designed as a reference tool once you are offered a position in the field, allowing you to revisit this advice when researching the environment into which you might be deployed.

It is not exhaustive, and is in no way supposed to be a comprehensive security plan from which you should base all your actions in the field. Each assignment is different, as are the threats and challenges in any given location. Circumstances will also change over time. Specific security advice will be available from various sources both prior to departure and also (most importantly) on arrival in the field. I would encourage all those deploying to field operations to actively seek out relevant safety and security related information early, in order to be best prepared.

This advice is designed for those new to field work, those returning to field work after some time away, and indeed should prove a useful reminder to those with a good deal of recent field experience as well.

In this chapter I deal with some of the most common health, safety and security issues. While some aspects of this chapter might seem obvious to some, I would expect there is something to think about for everyone.

To be clear, the distinction between safety and security is broadly as follows:

**Safety** – the threat to staff of physical or emotional harm as a result of such issues as medical complications, road traffic accidents, fire, electrics etc.;

**Security** – The threat to staff of physical or emotional harm as a result of violence (conflict, violent crime etc.).

Our health, safety and security are our own responsibility as much when we are abroad as when we are at home. The difference is that when working abroad the environment will usually be a new one and the risks and threats are likely to be more apparent. While NORDEM will ensure that adequate provisions are made on every level (from briefings, insurance and vaccinations prior to deployment to structural support from an international organisation in the field), it still remains your own responsibility to ensure that you remain as safe as possible. This of course refers to your day-to-day activities once deployed, but also to your preparations.

In general terms, for personnel deploying to field locations, there are three main strands to keeping yourself safe.

**Awareness** – Knowing what the risks and threats are;

**Avoidance** – Actively avoiding the threats (minimising the risks) wherever possible;

**Preparedness** – Being as prepared as possible, both in practical and psychological terms, should something happen.

These of course apply to us once we are deployed. There is a lot we can do before we leave as well.

## 2. Preparing for an assignment

Many aspects of your welfare once deployed will hinge on what preparations you have made prior to your departure. You will naturally take some time to research the location to which you are being sent. There will be various angles to this research including political, personal and of course safety and security issues. I will focus on the latter.

You should look into the following areas specifically:

- Health
- Conflict or conflict residue
- Climate
- Crime
- Equipment

### **Health**

There are many health issues that could negatively impact you once you are deployed (some of the common ones are mentioned later). Proper preparation can mitigate the risks.

There is a good chance that vaccinations against various diseases will be required prior to your deployment. You should investigate what diseases are present in the area to which you are deploying, and it is your own responsibility to ensure that you have appropriate vaccinations before you go. While NORDEM will facilitate the process, individuals need to be proactive in ensuring it gets done. It is also worth noting that several vaccines, which you might need to take, are given as a course of injections over an extended period of time. For example, should you need a rabies vaccination (which is quite common), there is a series of three injections required, which ideally will be given over the course of five weeks. Therefore it is recommended that you check what vaccinations are required from your doctor at least six weeks before you travel.

Certain medical conditions may preclude you from engaging in work abroad – particularly in more demanding environments. High blood pressure, a history of heart problems, any condition requiring regular medical treatment at hospital will be among those which might mean that this type of work is not suitable for you. Much will depend on the environment into which you are being sent, and on your medical history. Consult your doctor if you are in any doubt.

If you suffer from any medical condition for which you require medication (but which does not rule out your deployment), you should investigate whether it will be possible to buy that medication locally. You might also want to question the reliability of locally purchased medication. If it is possible to take your medical requirements with you that will usually be the best option. Check if your medication is legal in the country you are visiting. Pack all medication in your hand luggage. If you are taking prescribed medication take the prescription and a doctor's letter with you.

Inform yourself about HIV/AIDS infection levels. Remember that condoms are not always available so if there is a chance you might be sexually active during a deployment it could be wise to take a stock. Other related issues are covered later in the chapter.

It is always useful to take a simple first aid pack with you, and one element of this should be a blood protection pack. Details of the possible contents of these can be found in Annex A.

### ***Conflict/conflict residue***

You should investigate the nature of any ongoing or recent conflicts in the area to which you will be deployed. While the conflict (past or present) may not have direct bearing on your role in the field, it should absolutely have a bearing on the way you operate while you are there. You do not have to be a military strategist to draw simple conclusions from such information, which you can then use to keep yourself as safe as possible while in the field.

In some instances the conflict may have been resolved, and in this circumstance you should investigate what the nature of the conflict was. It may be that it was ethnically based, and this will be a significant factor in the manner in which you deal with staff and colleagues in the field – there may well be a need for cultural sensitivity over and above what might, elsewhere, be normal.

Former combatants will usually still be present, and may have issues with the organisation to (or with) which you are deploying. Knowing of such issues in advance can assist you in avoiding unnecessary complications. Having a general overview of the issues which caused the conflict, and how it was resolved, will invariably stand you in good stead when you deploy.

Where there is ongoing conflict, on whatever scale, you should ensure that you have as clear a picture as possible, in advance, of the nature of the conflict. This essentially means finding out who the main antagonists are, what they are fighting over, where they are located (as far as possible), what areas are most affected and what tactics, in general terms, are being employed.

In any environment where there is an ongoing conflict, or where there has been recent conflict, there is a high likelihood that certain dangerous 'conflict residue' will remain. Even in areas where conflicts have been resolved for significant periods of time, there will still be remnants. This refers primarily to mines, other explosives, weapons and other such dangerous items, which by their nature will often have been indiscriminately deployed, and therefore still pose a real threat. If this is the case, you must receive a professional, formal mine awareness briefing, either prior to departure, or very shortly after arrival. If none is provided by your organisation, you should demand one.

Any such briefing should go into detail about particularly dangerous areas of contamination, local warning signs that are used and recommended best practice advice (such as not to walk in certain areas, on the verge of roads etc.). Bear in mind that buildings, gateways and other areas can also contain 'booby traps' – mines are not only buried under the surface. Any areas likely to be contaminated in this way should be highlighted in the briefing and subsequently avoided without exception.

Every country affected in such a way will have unique best practice advice, and therefore I will not generalise in this chapter, other than to reiterate the need for a country specific briefing on this issue at the earliest possible time.

### ***Crime levels***

Having a clear indication of the level of crime in any given location prior to arrival is inherently sensible. Waiting until you arrive might prove to be too late. That it is not advisable to walk alone after dark, for example, whether you are male or female, is worth knowing before you find out the hard way. In areas of high crime, you might want to take with you a personal protection alarm. Small enough to put in your pocket/handbag, these devices, when activated, trigger a high volume tone to deter attackers/robbers etc. Bag snatching and muggings are prevalent in a number of areas in which NORDEM deploys staff. This simple device could protect you from attack, or in the event of an attack, will hopefully force the assailants to flee the scene. They are readily available for purchase over the Internet.

Also, if you are deploying to an area with high crime levels, you need to be alert from the time you arrive at the airport. If you are expecting to be picked up, be sure that the person meeting you identifies him- or herself with an organisation ID card or similar. Do not accept the fact that someone is there to pick you up simply because they have your name on a name board.

### ***Climate***

Although this may seem obvious, you should investigate the climate of the country to which you are deploying prior to departure. Specifically, you should look into the variety of weather you might encounter for the duration of your deployment, not just what the weather is doing at the moment. It is highly likely that items we might take for granted (suitable hot/cold weather clothing, sun cream, mosquito net, etc.) might not be available once deployed. You will probably also find that once you have deployed there is not much time to sort out simple administrative issues such as getting a good pair of gloves, sun hat etc.

In addition to seasonal variations in weather conditions, you should also investigate local regional variations. Many countries have diverse local conditions, with extremes of cold and heat or wet and dry being found in close geographical proximity. It will be important to know where exactly you might be deployed, or, if this is not established before arrival (which is likely), you should pack for all eventualities. Also bear in mind that while deployed, you may be relocated for operational or other reasons and find yourself in different climatic conditions.

## ***Equipment***

The equipment you decide to take will depend very much on the environment to which you are deploying. The better informed you are, the better prepared you will likely be with the equipment you decide to take. I list below certain essentials for most field assignments:

First aid kit (essential – everyone should have one) (See Annex A)  
 Blood protection pack (highly recommended in all environments) (See Annex A)  
 Medicines (as required)  
 Clothing suitable for climate (obviously)  
 Torch (usually useful)  
 Pocketknife/combination tool (for the more practically minded)  
 Personal protection alarm (recommended – particularly for women)  
 Smoke alarm (depending on accommodation standards)

You might want to consider putting together what is known as a ‘grab bag’. This is usually a small backpack in which to keep key items such as drinking water, communications gear (on arrival in the field), a first aid kit, a small supply of nonperishable food, a mosquito net and mosquito repellent (if necessary) and other essential items you might need in an emergency. The idea is to always have this bag at your side, so that in the event of any incident you have some useful equipment with you – no matter when or where the incident occurs.

## ***Other practical preparations***

### **Family**

Often, it is harder for the family at home to deal with someone being away than it is for the person deployed. This can have significant impact on relationships in the longer term, so the better family members and friends are prepared, the less likely it is that there will be negative impact. Complications with relationships etc. can adversely affect one’s ability to operate in the field and prove to be an unnecessary distraction.

Ensure that your family, partner and close friends are aware of what you are doing, where you are going, and that communication with them may be difficult or even impossible at times. Remind them that press coverage of difficult areas can often give the impression that they are more dangerous than they really are, and ensure that they know how to get a message to you in the event of an emergency. This will not always necessarily be easy, but knowing that they can get a message to you (even if it takes some time) will be a real consolation to them if there are any issues about which they are particularly concerned. It might also put your own mind at rest to know that should something happen at home, those who need to let you know can do so.

### **Administration**

Make sure your insurance provision is adequate to cover all the possibilities including death, serious injury and medical evacuation. This will be provided by NORDEM, but it is important that you are aware of the level of cover and that you are satisfied with the provisions made.

Ensure that both NORDEM and the organisation with which you are deploying have complete and up-to-date next of kin details on file.

Ensure that your private administration (bills, banking, tax dues [*selvangivelse* for example], vehicle, storage etc.) is all provided for so that you don't have unnecessary complications while you are away, or a nightmare when you return.

Useful websites for further research prior to departure:

<http://www.landsider.no/traveladvice/> (The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

<http://www.fco.gov.uk> (The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice)

<http://www.fhi.no> (Folkehelseinstituttet)

<http://www.thehtd.org/travel/> (This is the website for the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London)

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/> (This is the patient information website for travel vaccinations for the National Health Service in the UK)

### 3. On arrival

Bearing in mind the principles of *Awareness*, *Avoidance* and *Preparedness*, I would recommend all personnel deploying to the field to concentrate on the following areas.

#### ***Arrival briefings***

Ensure that you receive a comprehensive safety and security briefing on arrival. All organisations should provide this as standard, but if for some reason it fails to materialise, ask for it. It is essential that you receive up-to-the-minute information on all aspects concerning your safety and security. A good arrival briefing in a difficult environment should include (as a minimum) the following information:

- Background to the security/political situation;
- Geographical overview;
- Details of any recent security incidents or developments;
- Specific security threats (including mine awareness if applicable);
- Specific safety problems (crime, road traffic accidents etc.);
- Advice on how to avoid the above threats;
- Detailed overview of standard operating procedures (curfew, radio checks, out of bounds areas, movement reporting, evacuation procedures etc.);
- Contact lists (radio callsigns, telephone call trees etc.);
- Communications (what is available and how to use it);
- What to do in the event of an incident;
- Details of your support network (location of police, hospitals, security staff etc.).

Bear in mind, however, that not all environments will warrant such a comprehensive briefing. It may only be necessary to be briefed on the security/political background, crime, road traffic conditions and contact lists for example.



**If you are deployed to a country that is or has recently been in conflict, ensure that there is a specific mines awareness package included.**

### **Contact lists**

It may be that you are not issued with a contact list on arrival. I would strongly recommend that if this is the case, you either ask for one, or develop one yourself. If you do have a problem with which you cannot deal yourself, your only option is to call for help. A list of useful telephone numbers/radio call signs can prove invaluable. In countries where mobile telephone networks are vulnerable to overload/unreliability, remember to include landline numbers in addition to mobile.

### **Network**

Having a network once in the field is of great value, not only from a safety and security point of view, but also from a personal one. I would recommend that all staff new to a location actively seek out a network – both colleagues and others, with whom you can discuss issues, relieve stress and keep up to date with developments. The Norwegian community abroad is diverse, and will always be a useful starting point for those deployed by NORDEM.

Having trustworthy local contacts (either socially or among colleagues) is also often of great value. Local people are often very well informed about what is happening, and will usually be able to identify worrying or dangerous developments before many in the international community.

### **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

Larger international missions will have in place detailed SOPs. Where these are present, they will include some if not all of the following topics:

**Alert levels** – These may be determined as High, Medium, Low, by number, by colour or by various other methods. Each level will be defined in terms of the level of the security situation, and the subsequent risk posed to you. Usually, the definition will state what deterioration (or improvement) in the situation would be required to move to the next level (up or down). Also attached to each level will be a set of SOP instructions. For example, in a high risk environment, you might find that there is a requirement to conduct daily radio checks at the end of the working day (for instance once curfew is imposed). Should the situation improve and the alert level drop, curfew timings might be relaxed, and the need for a daily radio check might be withdrawn. This would all be laid out in SOPs. Organisations that employ SOPs require that all their staff is aware of what any change would mean to them in terms of working practices. In a well organised and disciplined organisation, all that is required is for the threat level to change, and the working practices will automatically follow suit in a predetermined manner

**Curfew restrictions** – If curfew restrictions are in place (and they are only used in fairly severe circumstances), they will generally restrict movement outside of certain areas at certain times of the day. They will usually vary according to alert levels (if in place). Often, a curfew will mean that no staff will be allowed to move outside of their accommodation between certain hours (usually the hours of darkness). Sometimes, movement between towns or cities will have curfew timings imposed to ensure all travel is completed during

daylight hours. Curfews can be state imposed, or implemented by the organisation in the field. Either way, it is imperative that they are adhered to. Curfews are always imposed because there is a real risk, not as a tool to restrict the movements or social activities of field staff.

**Radio procedures** – In many operations, staff will be expected to use hand held, vehicle mounted or base station radios. If you have never used a radio before, there is no need to be intimidated; it is simply a matter of getting used to it. You should ensure that you receive adequate training in this area, and if at all unsure, you should actively seek a radio training session from the operations/radio room on arrival. A few basics are laid out in Annex B.

**Out of bounds areas (OOB)** – In many countries there will be areas placed out of bounds by the security staff of your organisation. There are many reasons that areas can be placed OOB, but some of the most likely are ongoing conflict, civil unrest, mine contamination and extreme levels of crime and lawlessness. These areas should never be entered as there will always be good reason for them being placed out of bounds.

**Movement reporting** – There will usually be a requirement to report your whereabouts at predetermined times. In more difficult environments this might be as often as once an hour, or if travelling, each time you cross a ‘reporting line’ (usually a geographical feature or landmark by which the operations centre can track your progress along the route). In less challenging environments this requirement might be reduced to a daily check-in, usually at the end of the working day. It is important that you adhere to any such requirements, as a failure to do so will result in the operational centre having to locate you. This can sometimes prove difficult and can lead to others being seriously inconvenienced or even put at risk.

**Evacuation planning** – There will always be a ‘worst case scenario’ plan to evacuate all staff of the organisation. You should be made aware of the plan and its contents, and satisfy yourself that if the situation deteriorates to the point where an evacuation is called, you know what to do and where to go. There will be details such as destruction of office/work related documents, equipment to be stored/taken/left behind, support mechanisms for national staff not being evacuated, limits to personal belongings, and assembly areas. Once the evacuation is called, there will not be time to find out what the procedures are. You must be aware of them in advance. Also note that situations can deteriorate very swiftly indeed.

**Scenario planning** – In most security plans or SOPs there will be a section that recommends courses of action or a selection of choices available in various security or safety related situations. These will range from coming under direct small arms fire, artillery barrage or other military event to earthquakes, tsunamis or other natural threats. They will be based on specific issues relevant to the country of operation at the time, and reactions to incidents will differ from country to country. Just because you have faced a certain threat before, you do not necessarily know the best response in any given situation. Local attitudes to foreigners, aspects of a military campaign and various other factors can drastically change what you should or should not do in a given situation.

SOPs can incorporate more or less than is listed above, but you must ensure that you are aware of the contents, and how they impact you. Effectively, SOPs will form a set of rules within which you (and your colleagues) are expected to operate, and for what to do in a variety of possible scenarios should things go wrong. When a crisis occurs, it is too late to be pulling a file off the shelf to see what best practice is.

### ***Other issues to find out about***

Outlined below are a number of issues, which may not be specifically covered in any instructions you receive, but are important to explore for your own welfare. Some might make good questions at initial briefings etc.:

- Drinking water (what is safe – what is not);
- Photography (what/who can you and can't you take photos of?);
- Areas/places not to go to (can include certain bars/clubs/cafés where trouble is common);
- Cultural sensitivity (how you dress, eye contact, handshaking, forms of address, greetings, religious festivals etc.);
- Levels of crime (what particular types of crime are applicable or common?).

## **4. Common health issues**

**Diarrhoea and/or vomiting** – In many areas this will be the most common health issue faced by field workers. Poor hygiene in food handling, storing and cooking as well as poor personal hygiene and contaminated/dirty water supply can all be factors. Ensuring high standards of personal hygiene and eating only properly cooked food (not reheated or roadside food) will go a long way toward helping you avoid this ailment. Also, the boiling of drinking water can be a necessity in some locations, and it is always a good idea to have water purification tablets available as a last resort.

With severe bouts of diarrhoea/vomiting lasting more than three days, medical attention should be sought. If affected, it is important to ensure that you are constantly rehydrated with water, and if possible rehydration salts. A recipe for rehydration salts is included in Annex A. Try to get plenty of rest, avoid dairy products or spicy food and drinks containing caffeine as these may irritate your stomach. If you do not feel like eating, do not worry, as long as you constantly rehydrate.

If you are unable to keep drinks down, have increasing pain, are not getting better after three days or have blood in your diarrhoea, seek medical attention.

**Malaria** – Malaria is widespread in many tropical and subtropical countries and is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Malaria is spread by mosquito bites. The symptoms of malaria may include fever, chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, back pain, weakness, dizziness, confusion, cough, and in extreme cases coma.

Medication to prevent malaria is available in many forms, but several of the available options can cause unwanted side effects. You should consult your doctor about the available options, and if using them, ensure you are disciplined about taking them regularly over the entire prescribed period (including after your return if necessary).

But there is more that you can do to protect yourself. Avoiding being bitten is the first step. Wearing long sleeved clothing and long trousers, particularly around dawn and dusk as well as using mosquito repellent are effective measures. Note that insect repellents should ideally contain up to 50 percent DEET and be applied to any exposed skin. If you are also applying sun block to counter sunburn, the repellent should be applied on top of the sun block. It can also be sprayed onto cotton clothing for added protection.

Other recommended options are the use of a mosquito net (which should be impregnated with insecticide), burning pyrethroid coils and heating insecticide impregnated tablets, all of which will help to control mosquitoes. It is worth noting that these measures will also reduce the risk of other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever (see below), yellow fever and Japanese B encephalitis.

Initial symptoms of malaria can often be mild, difficult to recognise and can be confused with flu. If you develop flu-like symptoms once you return home (particularly in the first three months, but up to a year later), seek medical advice immediately and tell them that you've recently returned from a malaria risk zone. This will enable a speedy diagnosis and could save your life.

**Dengue fever** (also referred to as 'break bone fever') – Dengue fever is another mosquito-borne disease and is caused by one of four closely related virus types from the same family of viruses. Infection with one type of dengue fever virus does provide immunity to that strain, but does not provide cross-protective immunity to other strains. It is therefore possible for people working in a dengue-affected area to have four dengue infections. Each new infection tends to have greater effect than the last.

Infection with a dengue fever virus can produce a spectrum of illness, from a 'mild viral syndrome' to a severe and fatal bleeding disorder called Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF). Symptoms include any or all of the following: Flu-like illness, high fever and chills, shaking, sweating, severe headaches, severe pain behind the eyes, extreme muscle and joint pains (hence the name 'break-bone fever'), generalised rash over the body, 'bruising' and bleeding on the limbs, face and trunk of the affected person, vomiting or passing blood.

There are no vaccines or preventive medicines for this set of viruses, and the only way to protect against it is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. There is one type of mosquito that can carry the dengue viruses, and it feeds during the dawn, daytime and at dusk. The same precautions against getting bitten by malaria mosquitoes (covered above) apply in dengue areas.

The only treatment is to manage the affected person with fluids (including blood transfusions) and pain relief. There is no other treatment available. It should be noted, however, that it is extremely rare for a first infection to lead to the more serious consequences of this illness.

Dengue-infected areas include much of South and South East Asia, South America and central and southern Africa. If you find yourself working in a dengue-infected area and contract any of the symptoms listed above, you should seek medical assistance at your

earliest opportunity so the illness can be closely monitored, and fluids or blood transfusions (extreme cases only) administered as required.

**HIV/AIDS** – In 1985, scientists discovered the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV is a virus that is transmitted from person to person through the exchange of body fluids such as blood, semen, saliva and vaginal secretions. Sexual contact is the most common way to spread HIV, but it can also be transmitted by sharing needles when injecting drugs, or by having medical treatment using infected blood transfusions or equipment that has not been properly sterilised. As HIV reproduces, it damages the body's immune system and the body becomes susceptible to illness and infection. There is no known cure for HIV infection.

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS, is a condition that describes an advanced state of HIV infection. With AIDS, the virus has progressed, causing significant loss of white blood cells (CD4 cells) or any of the cancers or infections that result from immune system damage. Those illnesses and infections are said to be 'AIDS-defining' because they mark the onset of AIDS. As with HIV, there is no known cure for AIDS.

Certain countries and areas of the world are subject to higher rates of infection than others, with some countries experiencing extreme levels of infection. The risk attached to engaging in unprotected sex, buying sex from prostitutes or otherwise exposing yourself to infection obviously rises in direct proportion to this. It is worth noting that members of the sex trade in all countries are among the highest per capita group infected with HIV, along with drug addicts. Practising safe sex (using a condom for example), while recommended, is no guarantee against infection. Condoms can split, and HIV can be transmitted through sores, cuts and abrasions coming into contact with infected fluid.

It is worth researching HIV infection levels of the country and region to which you are deploying. Do not assume that you are immune to the risk of HIV/AIDS simply because you do not intend to be sexually active, use drugs, or plan on requiring a blood transfusion.

**Stress – causes and symptoms** – Everybody faces stress in their daily lives, and we are conditioned as human beings to deal with it. However, one has to accept that working in the field carries an inevitable additional burden in this regard. Having a basic understanding of stress, how it occurs and what can be done to deal with it is going to be useful.

Effectively, field workers are exposed to three types of stress as categorised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):

- *Basic stress*: This is the type of stress we are all used to on a daily basis. Deadlines, clashing commitments and difficulties in our work all contribute to our general stress level. This is the most common type of stress that we are likely to face in our normal lives. This type of stress is in no way reduced by working in the field. In all likelihood it will be increased;
- *Cumulative stress*: This refers to a repeated exposure to a stressful event or stressful events. In a fieldwork environment this might be the additional stress of witnessing violent or aggressive behaviour, or being intimidated by armed personnel. Working with different cultures, attitudes (civilian/military for example) or work ethics are common factors that will increase the level of accumulating stress that we might experience. An-

other common cause of cumulative stress among field workers is that they can be prone to over-identify with the beneficiaries whom they are helping or local victims of conflict with whom they come into contact;

- *Traumatic stress*: This is stress caused by a severe traumatic event either experienced or witnessed by an individual. This could range from witnessing a severe road traffic accident to being a victim of violence or any other extreme exposure to shocking events.

Any of the above types of stress can lead to deterioration in a person's capacity to function. It is generally accepted that it is often difficult to recognise the symptoms of stress in yourself. Less so with your colleagues.

Symptoms of all types of stress vary widely and will differ from person to person. With the basic stress and cumulative stress types, the symptoms can build up over time. Some of the common symptoms of these types of stress include:

- General depression;
- Irritability and short temper;
- Decreased mental capacity;
- Poorer than normal judgement;
- Slowness of thought;
- Inability to concentrate;
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs;
- Inability to sleep;
- A feeling of emptiness;
- Mood swings and over-emotional reactions;
- Increased/decreased willingness to socialise;
- Lack of appetite.

While the above list is far from exhaustive these can be considered common symptoms of stress. They may start out as hardly noticeable, but over time as an individual becomes more burdened with his or her stress level, the symptoms are likely to become more pronounced and eventually, if left untreated, extreme.

The symptoms of traumatic stress are in many ways similar, but their onset can be much more sudden, albeit quite possibly delayed. Traumatic stress, like the other types, affects people differently, and will largely depend on an individual's ability to handle stress. What might shock one person may not affect the next. Any of the above symptoms could affect any field worker at any time after they have been exposed to a traumatic event. Symptoms often occur weeks or even months later.

More dramatic and severe symptoms associated with traumatic stress include:

- Extreme depression;
- Feelings of guilt;
- Deep sense of failure;
- Irrational anger and potentially violent behaviour;
- Possible suicidal tendencies;

- Reclusive tendencies;
- Mental shutdown.

It is worth noting that the above are a selection of the extreme effects of traumatic stress. It is also worth bearing in mind that both basic and cumulative stress factors, if left untreated, could result in the same symptoms over time. The difference being that traumatic stress can bring them on suddenly.

**Managing and treating stress** – There are many ways to manage the stress factors that surround us daily. Acknowledging that we are subjected to stress and accepting that it adversely affects us is the first step. This applies whether the stress is basic or cumulative. Without accepting these facts, one will refuse to find mechanisms with which to manage that stress and it will likely get worse, at least until the factors causing it are removed.

Before you become adversely affected by these types of stress, ensuring that you get enough sleep, that you eat properly and that you take a suitable amount of time off work to relax and unwind will go a long way toward mitigating the effects of the inevitable stress levels that you will encounter.

However, with these types of stress, once the above facts are established there are some mechanisms that can ease the burden:

- Address the issues that are causing the stress. Identify them and either deal with them or accept that you cannot change them;
- If possible, take a break from the sources of stress which you are not in a position to influence;
- Talk to your colleagues, managers or friends about the issues that are burdening you;
- Listen to the opinions of others and try to see things from new perspectives;
- Avoid, where possible, events or issues which cause you stress;
- Maintain an emotional detachment from the victims of suffering as far as is possible;
- Do not be afraid to ask for help. Trying to fight through increasing levels of stress is not a coping strategy.

With traumatic stress, the event that triggers the symptoms has happened and can no longer be managed. What can be dealt with are the resulting effects of the traumatic stress. It is worth noting that in the case of delayed reaction to traumatic events, the symptoms can be mitigated in advance of their arrival, thus lessening their severity.

Anyone involved in or witnessing a traumatic event should:

- Debrief – Share their experiences with others involved in or witnessing the incident. The talking through of disturbing events can assist individuals to come to terms with their emotions surrounding the event. While this should not be a forced event, it should be encouraged;
- Seek professional help – There now exists a greater awareness of the problems faced by individuals after any traumatic event. Professional help is available;

- Do not reject the support offered – There is a tendency for field workers to feel that they should not be subject to traumatic stress, that they should be able to rise above it and take it in their stride, even if privately they realise that this is not happening. Remember, even battle-hardened soldiers suffer from traumatic stress. Nowadays they too seek support.

**With any type of stress** – if you are struggling, do not be too proud to talk to others and seek help. Avoid resorting to alcohol to wind down at the end of a hard day. This can lead to using alcohol as a crutch, without which you cannot relax, and in turn can lead to problems of abuse (see below).

Often, as mentioned, it is easier to identify symptoms of stress in others than in yourself. If you notice others showing signs of stress, either gently address them about it if this seems appropriate, or alternatively express your concerns to a senior member of staff and ask them to address the issue. Similarly, if someone approaches you to discuss the fact that you are displaying symptoms of stress, do not take it as a personal affront. Hear them out and listen to what they have to say. Consider that you might indeed be suffering from some degree of stress and be prepared to accept help in addressing it.

**Diet and alcohol** – Among the biggest health risks to people working abroad are poor diet and too much alcohol. A poor diet can lead to fatigue, increased stress, digestive problems (increased likelihood of diarrhoea and vomiting) and a general increase in susceptibility to illness. Over time the level of impact on an individual's ability to perform increases, and in extreme cases can lead to long term health problems. In some countries the choice of foods may be limited. In such circumstances it becomes all the more important to make an effort to seek out different sources of nutrition and maintain as balanced a diet as possible.

Alcohol abuse is not uncommon among almost all high stress professionals, and members of the international community abroad are no exception. As with maintaining a poor diet, there are cumulative health impacts but also there are more immediate behavioural aspects unique to alcohol abuse. Alcohol is a behaviour-changing drug. The fact that it is legal to consume alcohol in most countries does not lessen its impact on an individual's ability to perform his or her duties, nor does it lessen the long term health implications of drinking to excess. Relationships with colleagues and standards of professional conduct are also often directly (and negatively) impacted by drinking too much.

Combining a poor diet with too much alcohol multiplies the negative health effects (and behavioural impact of alcohol) on individuals.

**Drugs** – Do not be tempted to use illicit drugs while abroad. In many countries soft and hard drugs are readily available, and enforcement policies can seem relaxed. However, you will not find that, if caught using drugs, your status as a member of staff of an international organisation will help you. Quite the opposite, it is more likely to raise the profile of the case and result in harsher treatment and sentencing. Added to that, there are numerous health risks involved in drug use (not least possible contamination with various diseases including HIV, mental health issues etc.) that make it a very unattractive option.

Also be aware that when travelling, if drugs are found in your possession, you will be held responsible. Pack all luggage yourself and make sure it is securely fastened. Keep your



luggage with you at airports and other departure points to avoid having drugs planted in it. Be aware of approaches from people at airports – even seemingly innocent requests to look after someone’s possessions can lead to problems. Do not carry anything through customs for someone else. For similar reasons do not cross borders with people you do not know or drive across borders with unknown companions. Carry a doctor’s prescription for any medication you may need to avoid unnecessary delays at customs and immigration checks. Be cautious when accepting gifts from people abroad – it is easy to hide drugs in items such as trainers, cosmetics and children’s toys. Don’t allow yourself to be persuaded or coerced into carrying drugs.

**First Aid** – When working abroad, emergency services often leave something to be desired. Although hospital treatment is usually available, it will inevitably take a longer period of time before an injured person receives professional medical attention.

This makes first aid skills and equipment even more important in the event of an emergency involving injury.

Injuries usually occur when they are not expected – regardless of the cause, they usually come as a surprise. In more dramatic scenarios they may also shock those injured, as well as bystanders or passers-by (see traumatic stress above). Should you find yourself at the scene of an incident where someone (or more than one person) is injured, you should first of all assess whether or not you are actually in a position to help. Unless you have received formal first aid training you should accept that what you are able to offer will be limited. Local circumstances might also dictate that stopping to help is not appropriate for a variety of reasons such as ongoing conflict, angry/violent bystanders or witnesses and so on.

Your first priority in any situation where injury is involved is to make an assessment of the situation with the following aspects in mind:

- Is it safe for me to assist?
  - Is there anything I can offer?
- (Should the answer to either of the above questions be ‘no’, then it is recommended that you do not try to assist. However, if it is possible to assist in some way, and it is safe, you should of course do so).
- Is there any further danger to those injured?
  - Are there any other people present (colleagues, bystanders or other people involved) who can also help in some way?

Once the above is established, you can proceed to offer what assistance you can.

**It is highly recommended that anyone considering deploying with NORDEM attend a first aid training course.** It will help you to understand the issues surrounding first aid, what equipment is most likely to be useful, how to use it in an emergency, and generally prepare you as far as possible to deal with difficult situations involving injury.

The Red Cross offers first aid training courses appropriate for those deploying to field locations. There are Red Cross Societies across Norway. For your local branch visit

www.rodekors.no and click on the 'Her finner du oss' drop down menu (top right) to select your local branch which will be able to advise on suitable training. The training on offer is usually free.

**Sex** – Sexual activity carries risks of various kinds. Unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) are the two most obvious. Although HIV/AIDS has been covered in some depth already, there is a whole range of other infections that can be transferred through sexual activity. As mentioned previously, condoms can help, but they are not guaranteed to prevent infection, nor are they a guarantee against an unwanted pregnancy.

In field locations it is good to be aware that infection rates tend to be higher for most if not all such infections. Infection rates are usually especially high among workers in the sex trade.

Another factor to take into serious consideration is that of exploitation. Many field workers have left themselves open to accusations of exploitation of beneficiaries and/or local employees by engaging in relationships with them. The fallout of such allegations can be dramatic, widespread and very public.

## 5. Common safety issues

**Vehicle travel and Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs)** – Probably the highest risk activity of any field worker, road traffic accidents account for more injuries and deaths to humanitarian workers worldwide than any other single cause. There are some very simple precautions that can be taken to avoid them, or minimise the risk of serious injury in the event of an unavoidable accident:

- Wear your seatbelt at all times;
- Ensure the driver (if you have one) does not drive too fast, or overtake other vehicles in a dangerous manner;
- If you are driving yourself, take more care than normal. Take into account the probability of poorer road conditions and driving standards than what you are used to;
- Never allow a driver to be pressured into driving fast to 'make up time';
- Ensure drivers take sufficient rest breaks – this should always be factored into the planning of any trip;
- Ensure vehicles are equipped with first aid and firefighting equipment;
- Ensure drivers maintain their vehicles and check the serviceability of their vehicle regularly (oil and fluid levels, tyre pressures etc.).

The above simple measures, if implemented, will greatly reduce the chances of your coming to harm in a road traffic accident.

**Other vehicle-related issues** – RTAs can lead to other complications than direct injury to the driver or passengers. Should an 'international' vehicle be involved in a RTA that results in injury or death to others, damage to goods, property or livestock, this will (almost everywhere in the world) lead to repercussions. These may well be immediate (aggressive or threatening behaviour from witnesses or victims), and in such situations, the advice would often be to leave the scene of the accident and report immediately to the

local police station. In other situations, leaving the scene may cause more problems than it solves. Ultimately this is one of the many issues in the safety and security of field staff that requires local knowledge and a judgement to be made by the individuals at the scene. The better informed you are about local conditions and what has perhaps happened in similar circumstances in the past, the better able you will be to make a qualified, balanced and hopefully correct decision for the situation at hand.

If you come across others involved in a road traffic accident, or civilians injured in some other manner, and you feel it is appropriate to offer assistance, you should only get involved in areas where you can be of benefit. Do not offer any kind of first aid assistance unless you are qualified and equipped to do so. If doing so, remember the threat of HIV and other serious infections. Also bear in mind that you may be held responsible should something go wrong with your efforts.

Often, more assistance can be offered by using your communications equipment to call for qualified help, or using your vehicle to transport those less seriously injured to hospital. You should never try to move the more seriously injured in case you complicate their injuries and make things worse. Obviously if refusal to do so would result in the death of an injured party, you will need to make a judgement on the situation or seek advice from a qualified person.

It is always good practice to travel in vehicles with the doors locked and the windows up. This offers some protection against a range of threats including vehicle hijacking, robbery, assault and verbal/physical intimidation. Drivers should also be instructed to ensure, whenever possible, that they position their cars in a way which allows them to move off quickly. When parked they should be backed into a parking space, when stopped in traffic they should leave a car-length gap between their own car and the car in front. This will give the driver an option to move off if there is an incident of any kind nearby.

**Fire** – The risk of fire will vary greatly from country to country, but also between different standards of accommodation. If you are in any doubt about where you will be living, investing in a couple of smoke detectors is a sensible precaution. They are small, light and portable. When you move into any new accommodation make sure it has, and that you are familiar with, emergency/alternative exits. Accommodation should not be located too high up for the emergency services to come to your assistance in case of fire. The capabilities of the fire department in this regard will vary from country to country, and this is something worth investigating on arrival.

**Other safety considerations when choosing accommodation** – You should feel as safe as possible in the accommodation provided for you. Many factors will influence this, but some basics are paramount. You should be protected from local crime, conflict or other location specific threats. This may be achieved through living in a guarded compound, or alternatively an apartment block or hotel.

It is generally accepted that when living in an apartment or hotel, you should not live on the ground floor or the one directly above it. If there are publicly accessible areas (shopping facilities, bars, restaurants etc.) these should be separated from the apartments/rooms. Living areas should have restricted access and be limited to residents and their guests.

If living in a guarded compound, you should ensure that the guards are conducting shifts short enough that they do not fall asleep. Usually twelve hour shifts are regarded as an absolute maximum, eight hours is ideal. Sleeping guards should never be tolerated – particularly when the guards in question are armed. Guards should have clear and simple instructions as to how to react in the event of an incident, and their primary role is to protect and warn the occupants of a compound. They should not be given other tasks such as gardening, shopping or cleaning.

**Crime (nonviolent, petty crime)** – Petty crime is often a problem. Pickpocketing, bag snatching, theft from accommodation, vehicles and office space is an annoyance and can affect the operational capacity of an individual or an office. Internally within a team it can damage morale and create tense and fractured working relationships when there is potential staff involvement. The best means of countering such opportunistic crime is to remove the temptation. Carrying large amounts of cash, expensive jewellery, expensive cameras or electronic equipment should be avoided. Also, none of the above items should be left lying around in accommodation, vehicles or office areas. Crowded areas such as airports, train stations and other places where space is tight and people are moving in different directions are all favoured places for criminals.

**Photography** – Care should be taken when taking photographs. In many countries it is forbidden to take photographs of any military establishment, certain political offices, airports, train stations etc. Also, in certain cultures people do not wish to have their photographs taken without at least having had their permission asked for first. Failing to consider the above scenarios can lead to complications, possible confrontation and even detention by the security services.

Sometimes it is necessary to carry more cash than is ideal and there may be a requirement to carry a passport or other photo identification. In these instances carry both cash and identity documentation securely, preferably in a money belt or the like. You should avoid the temptation to keep large amounts of money or other valuables in bags, backpacks or handbags as these are more easily targeted.

It is worth checking whether photocopied identification (certified if necessary) is adequate for the purposes of identification. Where petty crime is particularly rife, it can be a sensible precaution to carry a small amount of money in an accessible pocket. If approached and threatened, the money can be used as a decoy. Of course, in any such situation, your personal safety is paramount, and you should never risk physical injury for the sake of cash or other valuables. Violent crime will be dealt with in a later paragraph.

**Corruption and bribes** – This, on occasion, can be a tricky issue. In principle international staff of agencies working in the field should, under no circumstances, encourage or support corruption by the payment of bribes, kickbacks or other ‘backhanders’. To do so sets a dangerous precedent, and can quickly become the normal or expected pattern of behaviour. At border posts, airports, customs offices or official vehicle checkpoints, any request for improper payment should always be refused and reported. Where corruption is operating at this lower level, usually contacting the authorities at a high level and demanding a resolution (or even the threat of doing so) will resolve the matter.

However, on occasion, the senior authorities themselves can be deeply involved in this type of corruption, and it can be the only way to get anything done – even for major international organisations. Staff should always refer to senior management if faced with this dilemma. Dealing with such issues at official and unofficial checkpoints is dealt with in a later paragraph.

## 6. Common security issues

**Image and acceptance/cultural sensitivity** – How we are perceived among the local population can have a major impact on our security in the field. It is vital that at all times we ensure that we do not alienate the local population through a lack of sensitivity or respect. This is particularly important with any type of religious sensitivities such as dress codes (especially for women in the main, but this also applies to men in many countries), festivals and icons/symbols. Less obviously, the manner in which we travel around in our vehicles can and often does cause offence, which can quickly lead to a security issue. Reckless and aggressive driving breeds resentment among the local population, and can become a major issue – this of course in addition to the risk of causing an accident. Ensure, as far as possible, that drivers drive in a cautious manner and are respectful of the rights of other road users including cyclists and pedestrians. If an individual, agency or the international community as a whole has a reputation for dangerous driving, a small and insignificant accident could become a major security incident.

**Demonstrations, crowds, mobs and other gatherings** – Where possible, the best advice to any field worker is to avoid any kind of gathering, however peaceful or ordinary it might seem. Large groups of any type can quickly become disorderly or even violent. Security force actions can on occasion provoke this, and often their reactions can be disproportionate. With this in mind, all field staff should make every effort to avoid such events.

However, in some roles abroad (such as election observation, police assistance, monitoring missions etc.) it may be a requirement to be present at such gatherings. Where this is necessary, it should only be done in teams of two or more. Also, ensure that should the situation deteriorate and become violent or unstable, the following criteria are met:

- You have discussed in advance with your colleagues your strategy, and have come to a common agreement that if one staff member feels that it is no longer safe to be present, you all agree to leave immediately. You can always debate the decision at a later stage;
- You have planned an exit strategy;
- You maintain communications with someone in a position to offer support (usually an operations room or field coordinator);
- Where possible you have back-up communications;
- You are on the outside of the gathering observing from a distance, rather than being in among the crowd;

- If you have a vehicle it is located in a place where it is unlikely to be blocked in by either the gathering or security forces;
- You are together as a team at all times.

Interpreters in particular and national staff in general can prove extremely helpful in gauging the mood at such events, and predicting any likely deterioration in the situation early on. Should you engage a local staff member in this role it is imperative that you respect their judgements and recommendations.

In addition to the above, there is a possibility that field workers may unexpectedly come across a gathering, either violent or nonviolent. In these circumstances, where possible, it is best to immediately leave the area by whatever means most appropriate and if the situation requires, move directly to a known place of safety. As soon as possible, you should report any such unexpected gathering to your colleagues in order that others do not run into the same crowd.

If your job does not dictate that you should be present at any kind of gathering, however peaceful the organisers' intentions, simply do not go.

**Mines** – As mentioned previously, if you are being deployed to a mission area contaminated by mines, it is imperative that you receive a full, professional mine awareness briefing before you arrive or shortly thereafter. Anything less is not acceptable. This section is therefore kept deliberately brief, and will not go into too much detail about mines and other unexploded ordinance (UXO). However, it is important to lay out some basics.

If deployed in a mined or potentially mined area:

- Do
- Insist on a mine awareness briefing;
  - Adhere to all rules relating to OOB areas etc.;
  - Ensure you are aware of where the mined areas are and how (or if) they are marked;
  - Report anything that you see that causes you concern.
- Do not
- Stray into or near any areas that you are not 100 percent certain are not contaminated;
  - Drive or walk off solid surface road or pavements;
  - Touch anything that looks to be of a military nature, suspicious or out of place;
  - Disregard any advice or instructions given at your mine awareness briefing.

**Violent crime** – It is not unheard of for field workers around the world to be targeted by violent criminals or groups. Although not common, it is best to be aware of the possibility of such an incident, and to know how best to react. As with so many security related issues, should this type of incident occur, it will come as a surprise, so any forethought you may have given it will help you to cope with the situation in the most appropriate manner.

Usually violent crime encompasses mugging, carjacking and robbery with the use of/ threat of violence or sexual assault. With the exception of sexual assault, the motive is usually financial profit, although in some environments equipment (vehicles, radios etc.) might well be targeted for theft by armed groups or militias for their operational use. Sexual aggression can, on rare occasions, be a by-product of the above, and is more prevalent in some environments than others. It can also be used as a tool of intimidation directed at the international community in general or an organisation or individual in particular.

Security staff with local knowledge should be consulted specifically on these issues, with a view to giving you a clear understanding of the local threats and the recommended response to those threats. The recommended responses to various threats will differ from country to country.

In principle you should always remember that your physical wellbeing, as well as that of your staff, colleagues and beneficiaries, is paramount. If you are threatened with physical violence, it is usually (with some local exceptions in extreme circumstances) best to capitulate to the demands of those presenting the threat. Remember – money, valuables and agency equipment can be replaced and is usually covered by insurance anyway. National staff should be reminded of this if they are working in an environment where such incidents are possible.

Sexual assault and aggression is another area where judgement is called for under extreme circumstances. This threat is usually (although not exclusively) targeted at women. While there is a range of options available to those threatened with or witnessing sexual violence (fight, run, give in or a combination of these), your long-term physical wellbeing must be the paramount consideration under any such circumstances. Ultimately, survival under such extreme circumstances would be the aim.

**Kidnapping** – The use of kidnapping and hostage taking as a political or a profit-making tactic has become more prevalent in recent years. This has unfortunately included the targeting of field workers on a number of occasions. However, in statistical terms the likelihood of being kidnapped remains small. Despite this fact, there are some simple facts surrounding kidnaps/hostage situations that are worth knowing as background information:

- Surviving a kidnapping or hostage situation is the primary goal of any captive;
- In the vast majority of cases, kidnap victims are ultimately released – usually unharmed;
- The two most dangerous times during the course of a kidnap incident are the point at which the victim is taken, and the point at which they are released or rescued;
- Kidnaps are not spontaneous events – they are usually well planned and executed;
- Because of the two points directly above, resisting at the point of being ‘snatched’ will usually result in physical harm (potentially fatal);

- Do not argue or anger your captors by expressing political or religious views or opinions. You should cooperate as far as possible with their instructions or demands, remembering that survival is your primary goal;
- Try not to do anything to make yourself stand out from the group (if you are indeed in a group);
- If appropriate it can be acceptable to get to know your captors, and to discuss your own circumstances, family etc. with the intention of making it harder for them to do you harm. However, this can expose you to emotional pressure from your captors, and should be carefully considered as a strategy before being employed;
- If you feel your life is threatened, escape is an option. However, remember that the majority of failed escapes result in severe repercussions for those making the attempt, as well as possibly for other captives. Also, a successful escape may increase the likelihood of harm to others remaining in captivity;
- A negotiated release is a tense period where captors will feel extremely vulnerable and nervous. This is the reason that this phase of a kidnap or hostage situation is so dangerous. If your release seems imminent, cooperate with all instructions and do not do anything unpredictable.
- If a forced rescue is attempted, simply take cover as best you can, cover your head with your hands (both to protect yourself and to show that you are not armed) and obey immediately any instructions issued to you by your rescuers. It may be the case that they do not identify you as a hostage initially, so do not argue, resist or try to run. You may find yourself being handled aggressively until your identity is confirmed.

Remember that despite the upsurge in incidents of kidnapping globally over the last few years, many of these cases are geographically clustered. When deployed, assess the risk of this happening in the area to which you are deploying, and seek appropriate advice on the local situation from security staff with local knowledge and experience if it is a problem.

**Checkpoints** – There are various types of checkpoints that might be encountered during field operations. Vehicle checkpoints manned by official security forces (army, police or other government agencies) are the most likely. Official security forces might also stop pedestrians and conduct identity and documentation checks. Unofficial checkpoints, similar in nature to those listed above, have also been known to be conducted by unofficial groups such as rebel forces, opposition militias etc. Both should be treated carefully, however professionally they are conducted.

Always approach a checkpoint carefully. If in a vehicle ensure that the driver slows down in plenty of time and approaches the checkpoint at no more than walking speed. At night, it can be useful to turn on the interior lights of the vehicle to illuminate its occupants, and if necessary switch off the headlights of the vehicle (leave the sidelights on).

If there is no common language, it is often best to let local staff (driver/interpreter) conduct the initial interactions at any checkpoint. This will usually be adequate to be allowed



to pass through unhindered. However, if this is problematic due to the race, ethnicity or other aspects of the local staff member's profile, or if the conversation deteriorates to the point where the local staff member no longer feels comfortable, it can be best for an international staff member to take the lead.

In all dealings with checkpoint officials (even unofficial ones) it is imperative that you are courteous, polite and respectful. The people manning the checkpoint have the upper hand in terms of authority, and if they feel this is threatened, they can quickly become defensive, tense and subsequently aggressive or difficult. It is worth noting that the less professional the demeanour of those manning a checkpoint, the more cautious one should be when dealing with them.

It is not uncommon for checkpoint staff to demand some persuasion to allow you to continue. This may manifest itself in a request to search the vehicle or person, in a request for a payment (bribe) or for a gift (anything ranging from a cigarette to something far more substantial). Such requests need to be taken in context of the local situation. You should always remember that by conceding to any such request you are setting a precedent – not only for yourself, but also for the rest of the international community! While it may not be a problem to offer a cigarette or two to checkpoint staff for example, in doing so you will have to expect to be handing over cigarettes every time you pass the checkpoint (and likely any other checkpoint) from then on.

While offering tokens such as cigarettes might arguably be acceptable (taking into account the above considerations), anything more substantial is unacceptable for the same reasons. If checkpoint staff will not allow you to proceed without the payment of a bribe or other unacceptable gift being exchanged, return to your original location and report the issue to your superiors. Usually such issues can be solved at a higher level than at the checkpoint itself.

Most agencies will issue clear instructions and guidelines on the issue of vehicle or personal searches. Usually agencies resist this on principle because it can be used as an obstruction tool in the future. Seek guidance on the local situation from the agency you are working with.

**Remember** – your aim is to transit any checkpoint as efficiently as possible. Avoid being flustered or impatient with the staff at a checkpoint, and never try to bully your way through, no matter how senior you may be. It will invariably take longer, and could potentially be dangerous.

## 7. Communications

In an emergency, our ability to call for assistance is one of the fundamental ways in which we can help ourselves. If we are faced with a health, safety or security issue, and cannot call for help, the situation will inevitably prove far more difficult to deal with.

A variety of equipment is available for communications. Both mobile and satellite telephones are increasingly common, and HF and VHF radios continue to be widely employed. Whatever equipment is issued to you during your deployment, there are a few simple principles to observe:

- Know how to use what is made available. Even if you are not the primary user of a piece of equipment (vehicle mounted HF radio for example), ask for some basic instruction about how to operate it in the case of an emergency.
- Make sure you have call lists handy. Even if you know how to call, if you do not know who to call you will still have problems;
- Do not be intimidated by the equipment. People are often easily intimidated by talking on the radio. However, once you get the hang of it, it soon becomes very straightforward. Some simple guidance is given in Annex B, and the phonetic alphabet is listed in Annex C;
- Remember: Think before you speak.

## **8. Summary**

In summary, it must be remembered that this chapter deals with many important but often unlikely scenarios. The intention has been to introduce you as a potential field worker or remind you as an experienced field worker, of some of the key health, safety and security issues with which you might at some point be faced. The advice given is not by any means exhaustive, and should be supplemented with a thorough pre-deployment briefing, specific to the area to which you will deploy, as well as a field level security briefing immediately on arrival.

It is important to take your health, safety and security seriously. You are more vulnerable when deployed in the field than you are at home. That being said, it is equally important to treat the risks and threats in an appropriate and proportionate manner in relation to the environment. The point is always to achieve a balance between operational effectiveness (after all, you are being deployed to do a job) and health, safety and security issues.

## **ANNEX A**

### **First aid kit**

Bandages

Dressings

Butterfly sutures (also referred to as sterile strips – external sticking stitches)

Plasters

Imodium (for diarrhoea)

Rehydration salts (see 'home-made' rehydration salts recipe below)

Painkillers (Panadol, Aspirin etc.)

Scissors

Tweezers

Saline solution

Eye bath

Gloves

Safety pins

First aid booklet (instructions)

The above list is far from exhaustive and can be added to. A person's knowledge and experience of first aid may play a large part in determining what to take. Remember, however, that even if you do not know what to do with certain items, there is a high likelihood that there will be somebody available who does, and it is better then to have the kit.

### **Blood protection pack**

Syringes (several sizes)

Blood use cannula

Sterile wipes (alcohol free)

Sterile solution

Gloves

### **'Home made' rehydration salts – suggested recipe**

To 1 litre cooled boiled water (some people recommend using rice water, that is, the water left in the pan after cooking rice),

- Add 1 teaspoon salt
- Add 8 teaspoons sugar
- Mix well

**ANNEX B****Basic radio procedures**

Call signs – Each person or team issued with a radio will be allocated a call sign. These differ, but are commonly either a ‘code’ name or a mixture of phonetic letters and numbers. Some common call signs might be place names (usually from outside the operating environment to avoid confusion) or something such as ‘Bravo two zero’ for example. Call signs are used to identify to all authorised users of the radio network who is speaking, and to ensure that anyone listening in from outside does not know who is talking. Names of individuals should never be used over the radio network.

Location designations – In a similar manner to people’s names, places are never directly referred to over an open radio network. Places are usually also given code names. This will apply to both towns and cities, specific locations within those towns and cities, as well as markers along routes in between, project locations in the field, airports etc. It can be useful to carry a list of code names and call signs when you are new to an environment where radios are being used. Be careful, however, that any such lists are treated as sensitive documents. Disclosure of call signs or location designations could result in the network operator having to reallocate either or both. This would not be popular!

Radio language – ‘radio speak’ is a language all of its own, and can seem daunting at first. However, I list a few basics below, which will help (see also phonetic alphabet in Annex C):

“Hello” – used to initiate a call, in conjunction with the call sign of the person with whom the caller wishes to speak (“Hello London”). The call sign of the person being called is usually repeated for clarity;

“This is” – used as an introduction of the person initiating the call, used in conjunction with his or her own call sign (“Hello London, this is Paris”);

“Do you read me?” or “Do you copy?” – used to establish whether the person being called can hear that you are calling (“Hello London, this is Paris, do you read me?”);

“Over” – used to indicate that the person transmitting a call has finished what he or she is saying and is expecting an answer (“Hello London, this is Paris, do you read me? Over”).

The above would be a typical start of a radio conversation. To respond the person being called would probably simplify things by dropping the “hello” (as the conversation has started already) and say, “Paris, this is London, I read you loud and clear. Over”.

Some other useful terms:

“Roger”/“Copy that” – I understand;

“Send” – one radio user asking another to send their message;

“Say again” – used to indicate that the message has not been received properly and needs repeating;

“Say again all after .....” – The message was only received up to and including.....;

“I say again” – used to signal that the speaker is about to repeat something;

“Out” – Used to signal the end of the conversation once both parties have communicated their message;

“Wait out” – One radio user indicating to another that he or she is ending the communication, but that the other user should wait as he or she will call back shortly.

**Basic radio procedures (cont.)**

An example of a typical radio conversation is outlined below using the call signs Alpha One Zero (A10) and Alpha Base (AB) and a route designated as Dolphin:

A10 – “Hello Alpha Base, hello Alpha Base, this is Alpha One Zero, over.”

AB – “Alpha One Zero this is Alpha Base, send over.”

A10 – “Alpha Base, I am moving east along Dolphin, am ten kilometres from your location and have suffered a vehicle breakdown. Will repair locally and be at your location in two hours, over.”

AB – “Alpha One Zero, say again all after – Breakdown, over.”

A10 – “I say again – Have suffered a vehicle breakdown. Will repair locally and be at your location in two hours over.”

AB – “Roger Alpha One Zero, you have suffered a vehicle breakdown, will repair locally and estimate to be at my location in two hours over.”

A10 – “Roger Alpha Base, will keep you informed of any changes, Alpha One Zero out.”

The above conversation would take no more than thirty seconds to conduct between two experienced radio operators, and would serve to inform base of a team’s expected delay due to vehicle breakdown. Once certain key phrases and expressions are understood, the use of a radio becomes quite simple.

## **ANNEX C**

### **The international phonetic alphabet**

A – Alpha  
B – Bravo  
C – Charlie  
D – Delta  
E – Echo  
F – Foxtrot  
G – Golf  
H – Hotel  
I – India  
J – Juliet  
K – Kilo  
L – Lima  
M – Mike  
N – November  
O – Oscar  
P – Papa  
Q – Quebec  
R – Romeo  
S – Sierra  
T – Tango  
U – Uniform  
V – Victor  
W – Whiskey  
X – X-ray  
Y – Yankee  
Z – Zulu

In addition, the Norwegian military uses the following:

Æ – Ærlig  
Ø – Østen  
Å – Åse



*The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights* aims to contribute to the realisation of internationally recognised human rights, through research and reporting, teaching, advisory services, information and documentation. The Centre was founded in 1987 and is organised as an interdisciplinary centre under the Faculty of Law at the University of Oslo. Since 2001 the Centre has been designated as the National Institution for Human Rights in Norway.

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