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Abstract

The brutal murder of 17 national staff members of Action Contre le Faim (ACF) in Sri Lanka in August 2006 and ambushes, kidnappings, and murders of aid workers elsewhere have captured headlines. This article reviews the prevailing explanations, assumptions, and research on why humanitarian actors experience security threats. The scholarly literature on humanitarian action is fecund and abundant, yet no comparative review of the research on humanitarian security *and* scholarly sources on humanitarian action exists to date. The central argument here is twofold. First, an epistemic gap exists between one stream that focuses primarily on documenting violence against aid workers — a proximate cause approach — while a second literature proposes explanations, or deep causes, often without corresponding empirical evidence. Moreover, the deep cause literature emphasizes *external*, changing global conditions to the neglect of other possible micro and internal explanations. Both of these have negative implications for our understanding of and therefore strategies to address security threats against aid workers.

Keywords

aid worker fatalities, humanitarian action, humanitarian security, violence against aid workers

On 17 December 1996, armed men assassinated six International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates working in Chechnya in their beds while they slept. Almost seven years later, on 19 August 2003, a suicide bomb decimated the Canal Hotel, the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq. The bomb killed 22 individuals, including the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and wounded more than 160 others. On 27 October 2003, another suicide bomb killed 12 people in front of the headquarters of the ICRC in Baghdad. Almost immediately following the UN bombing, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1502, which declared

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deliberate attacks against humanitarian actors or peacekeepers a war crime (United Nations Security Council, 2003). Both the UN and the ICRC have lost dozens, even hundreds, of employees in the line of duty. The brutal murder of 17 national staff members of Action Contre le Faim (ACF) in Sri Lanka in August 2006 and ambushes, kidnappings, and murders of aid workers in Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have brought humanitarian security to the front pages.

The disturbing aspect of the bombings in Iraq and the murders of the ACF staff mentioned above is not that aid workers have died in the line of duty, for unfortunately this happens all too often around the world. Rather, these represent large-scale and deliberately targeted actions against humanitarian actors and therefore present a serious, and violent, challenge to the principles that underlie humanitarian action. Indeed, recent research suggests that intentional violence represents a significant threat to aid workers, one that grew between 2006 and 2008 (Stoddard et al., 2006, 2009). That some of these heinous and increasingly frequent incidents occurred in conflicts that have erupted in the post-9/11 environment raises questions about how to ensure physical security for humanitarians in a post-9/11 world. The response to security concerns across the humanitarian community has been somewhat schizophrenic. On the one hand, some argue for more 'protective' and 'deterrent' measures, while others argue 'acceptance' strategies offer valuable and effective alternatives (Van Brabant, 2000). Some agencies have developed sophisticated security analysis and reporting tools, policies, and procedures, while others continue, despite the risks, to operate without standard or even established protocols or security management strategies.

Underlying the threats and risk is the inevitable and difficult question of why actual incidents of intentional violence against aid workers are on the rise. For many, targeting results from perceptions of being a part of a conflict, yet the core principles of humanity, impartiality, and operational neutrality are supposed to ensure that humanitarian actors remain apart from even as they respond to violence and suffering. Reflections on the reasons for the perceived explosion of targeted incidents against humanitarian actors have elicited discordant views. Some analysts argue that the situation has fundamentally changed in the past few years, while others believe that the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan represent an intensification of dilemmas that humanitarians have faced for decades. Still others contend that humanitarians must return to narrowly defined core principles for protection, as opposed to expanding or adapting the principles to reflect changing circumstances. One analyst suggests that 'humanitarian action seems to be taking place in an increasingly murky landscape beset by manipulations and tensions between policy choices and even philosophies of humanitarianism' (Donini, 2003: 8). In terms of security, the 'purists' posit that increased insecurity is due to the 'degradation' of humanitarian principles while the 'integrationists' argue it has more to do with the changing context in which violence is taking place. Both agree that humanitarian action is changing, but differ on the remedy (Donini, 2003). Security concerns, among other issues, are forcing agencies to make difficult strategic and operational choices about where and how to intervene. In other words, concerns about humanitarian security are unfolding within the larger canvas of debates about the nature of humanitarian action.

Assuming humanitarians are increasingly targeted, why is this? Do these incidents and their causes represent a paradigm shift or simply an evolution in the context for humanitarian action? What evidence supports these possible conclusions? Already a

growing body of empirical research and scholarly and applied literature exists that both directly and indirectly address the issue of humanitarian security. Curiously though, aside from a few ‘usual suspects’ (for example, Abbott, 2006; Barnett, 2004; Fast, 2002; Rowley, 2007; Sheik et al., 2000; Stoddard et al., 2006), a disconnect exists between two streams of the literature in relation to causation. One stream advances an epidemiological approach that emphasizes ‘proximate causes’ of violence against aid workers based on empirical evidence, while another tends to speculate about ‘deep causes,’ often without corresponding evidentiary support. Indeed, the research and statistics focus on individuals and more micro-level, specific details and patterns: the numbers and types of incidents, to whom, and where they happen. This epidemiological approach analyzes potential risk factors, mostly endogenous but including some exogenous factors as well, that represent ‘proximate causes’ of aid worker victimization. In contrast, a separate literature mostly takes for granted that the numbers are increasing and proposes global trends or ‘deep causes’ — the increasing politicization of impartial and independent humanitarian aid, the changing nature of violence, terrorism, and so on — for why this might be so. The primary focus of this literature is usually on global trends and humanitarian action, and assertions about violence against aid workers emerge as a side effect of these factors.

In reality, until recently very little empirical evidence has existed to support or undermine any theories about causation, in part because little research existed. Until the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) released their joint and comprehensive study (Stoddard et al., 2006), most writing on this topic cited only a handful of studies (for example, King, 2002c; Sheik et al., 2000). Indeed, the ODI/CIC study is one of the few that links empirical evidence and deep causes, even as methodological limitations hinder the robustness of its conclusions. A larger pool of research exists but is not widely recognized or available. Some in this pool address specific populations, time periods, or locations, or cover security issues more indirectly. While a gap between ‘theory’ and ‘reality’ characterizes many other fields and problems, it is a concern here because of the lack of a solid evidentiary base upon which some scholars and commentators base their assertions about trends. Determining cause and intention is difficult in the absence of specifically asking those who perpetrate security incidents why they did so, and is especially elusive given the dearth of information on this subject more generally.

This article reviews the extant body of research on this topic — the ‘state of the statistics’ — before turning to the prevailing explanations and assumptions about why humanitarian actors are experiencing more threats to their security. The scholarly literature on humanitarian action is fecund and abundant, yet no comparative review of the research on humanitarian security *and* scholarly sources on humanitarian action exists to date. The central argument here is twofold. First, an epistemic gap exists between one stream of literature that focuses primarily on documenting violence against aid workers — a proximate cause approach — while a second proposes explanations, or deep causes, without corresponding empirical evidence. This gap and the associated interpretations of the authors largely but not exclusively mirror the scholar or practitioner base of the authors. For example, humanitarian practitioners lament the slippage of principles while international relations scholars tend to focus on terrorism and security. Unsurprisingly, these interpretations generally serve their interests and lead to corresponding

prescriptive solutions to the challenges of humanitarian action. Moreover, the deep cause literature emphasizes changing global conditions to the neglect of other possible explanations. In other words, the epistemic disconnect crowds out alternative explanations. Consequently, these sources tend to propose factors *external* to the control of humanitarian actors as responsible for an increase in violence against aid workers and largely ignore those (internal, micro-level) factors over which humanitarians do exercise some influence. Both of these have negative implications for our understanding of and therefore strategies to address security threats against aid workers.

Analyzing patterns, trends, and the ‘state of the statistics’: Proximate causes of violence against aid workers

The body of research and documentation about violence against humanitarian actors is growing, yet very little of this research addresses the *deep causes*, explored below, of security incidents per se. Instead, most adopt an epidemiological approach that focuses primarily on morbidity (illness), mortality (death), and related risk factors, and even the mental health consequences of security and safety incidents for aid workers and other populations.¹ This ‘proximate cause’ literature, extant in a wide variety of sources from journal articles to online news sources, is difficult to gather; it is scattered among a variety of disciplines, and sources are not always easily accessible or available to those outside the academy. Generally, the same sources appear, among them being Dennis King’s compilations from ReliefWeb (King, 2002c, 2004), Sheik et al.’s study (Sheik et al., 2000), and the more recent joint ODI/CIC study (Stoddard et al., 2006, 2009). This section summarizes this research and documentation, highlighting patterns and lessons and identifying gaps between research, literature, and experience.

In introducing the literature, several caveats are necessary.² A major problem with the existing research and documentation is the lack of consistency in definitions and statistics of the various data sources, which makes it very difficult to determine whether aid workers are targeted in increasing numbers and with increasing severity. One problem, to which the ECHO Security Review Report (Barnett, 2004: 14–23) refers, is defining exactly what constitutes a ‘security incident’ and who is an ‘aid worker.’ Each organization defines security incidents using criteria that reflect its own purposes and goals (for example, the type of information it collects about staff, liability and insurance factors, and agency risk thresholds), and various studies differently define terminology (for example, intentional violence and whether it includes or excludes events such as landmine explosions). While some organizations differentiate ‘security incidents’ as acts of violence from ‘safety incidents’ (that is, accidents, illness, and disease; Martin, 1999), others collapse these into the same category.

Defining who is an aid worker becomes particularly important in tabulating incidents and fatalities. The ICRC bombing in Baghdad in October 2003 killed 12 people, none of whom were ICRC delegates.³ Obviously this is a security incident, yet counting fatalities related to this and other incidents is a definitional conundrum. Relying on media sources compounds this issue, since media reports often collapse ‘foreigner’ with ‘aid worker.’ For example, the headlines about the November 2005 kidnapping of four volunteers with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Iraq referred to the four as ‘aid workers,’ ‘human

rights activists,' and 'peace workers,' sometimes all in one news report.⁴ Although CPT volunteers are usually foreigners and share principles with some humanitarian actors (for example, solidarity with local populations), they are neither humanitarians nor development workers. The kidnapping of 23 South Koreans in Afghanistan in July 2007 is a similar and more recent case in point, with alternating references to them as aid workers and missionaries.⁵ In addition, deaths and acts of violence against expatriate workers usually garner more headlines than for national staff. A number of sources point to higher (Barnett, 2004; Buchanan and Muggah, 2005; Fast, 2002; InterAction, 2001; Rowley, 2007; Sheik et al., 2000) and rising (Stoddard et al., 2006) numbers of incidents against national staff, but determining the *rate* of incidents runs into the so-called 'denominator issue.'

The 'denominator issue' is crucially important in determining whether security incidents have increased relative to the numbers of aid workers. The black hole of hard and reliable data on the number of total aid workers within a given context or even within some organizations makes it extremely difficult to calculate *rates* of incidents, where the number of incidents (the numerator) is divided by the number of aid workers (the denominator).⁶ Obviously, rates are necessary to calculate a more accurate picture of the problem. As the ECHO Report emphasizes:

The fact that there are only a small number of deaths does not of itself mean that a country is not dangerous. Chechnya is an obvious example. A high number of deaths in a country may merely reflect the fact that there were many humanitarian personnel in those countries, and conversely the low number of deaths may be because there were very few humanitarian personnel present. (Barnett, 2004: 21)

Indeed, the picture is more complex than simple reports of an increased number of incidents, targeted and random, might suggest.

Despite these caveats, the evidence is growing, and the perception is certainly entrenched, that it is now more dangerous for humanitarians than before. The explosion of research and documentation on this issue tends to support the notion that violence against humanitarian workers is increasing around the world.⁷

Research from the 'usual suspects'

As late as 2004, a summary report of both existing knowledge and best practices in security management concluded: 'There is no hard evidence at this point to suggest that there has been a significant increase in the number of security incidents either in numbers of incidents, or in numbers of people affected' (Barnett, 2004: 22).⁸ No comprehensive data set existed to confirm or contradict assertions about aid worker fatalities. Researchers affiliated with the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (JHSPH) conducted two of the earliest studies on the general topic of violence against interveners, more specifically UN peacekeepers and aid workers. In examining the numbers of UN peacekeeping deaths, Seet and Burnham (2000) documented more deaths between 1988 and 1998 (807) than in the previous 40 years (752), but the *rate* of deaths did not differ between the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Of the 41.2 percent of deaths due to intentional violence,

36 percent resulted from hostile acts. They concluded the increase in deaths (versus the rate) was due to the growing number and scale of missions. Although their study did not investigate aid workers, they did find that the relative risk for peacekeepers escalated in missions that included humanitarian assistance.

Sheik and colleagues identified a number of trends and risks related to aid worker fatalities. They examined 382 deaths of aid workers, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Red Cross societies, and UN programs and peacekeepers, between 1985 and 1998 and concluded: 'Our findings confirm the belief that deaths among humanitarian workers have increased' (Sheik et al., 2000: 167). They found that many deaths occur early in an assignment (one-third within the first 90 days) and that the timing was not correlated with previous experience, meaning the risk was likely due to a new context as opposed to a lack of experience. Furthermore, they identified intentional violence as the cause of death in 253 (68 percent) of the cases.

In a follow-up to the Sheik et al. study, researchers found that a majority of the deaths (18 of the 33 total deaths in the study, or 55 percent) were due to intentional violence, with the remainder (minus one unknown) due to unintentional violence, accidents, or coincidental illness (Rowley, 2007; see also Rowley, 2005). However, intentional violence accounted for just under one-half (48 percent) of the total cases (230) of deaths, medical evacuations, and hospitalizations. The majority of cases (64 percent overall, 56 percent of intentional violence) occurred in Africa, which also had the largest proportion of staff, and in traveling to and from project sites (61 percent of the 36 intentional violence cases). Using confirmed numerator and denominator data, this study estimates a rate of six intentional violence incidents per 10,000 aid workers (Rowley, 2007; Rowley et al., 2008).⁹

A separate study examined medical evacuations (162) and deaths (37) among UNHCR field employees — national and international staff as well as consultants — in 1994 and 1995 (Peytreman et al., 2001). The major causes of evacuations were infectious diseases (17 percent) and accidents (15 percent). Among reported fatalities, the major causes included infectious diseases (41 percent), cancer (24 percent), accidents (16 percent), and cardiovascular disease (11 percent). Only four fatalities and two evacuations resulted from firearms use or violence, which they classified as 'accidents.' This study is unusual in that it addressed risky sexual behavior and HIV infection among aid workers, reporting HIV as the leading cause of infectious disease evacuation and death among national staff. As in other studies, national staff and those working directly in the field (including drivers) were most at risk, with 75 percent of deaths among national staff. More than one-half (59 percent) of their reported cases occurred in Africa.

Researchers from two organizations, the ODI and CIC, conducted the largest and most comprehensive study to date on fatalities, kidnappings, and serious injury to aid workers (Stoddard et al., 2006, 2009). In total, they reported 408 major incidents of violence, comprising 941 victims and 434 fatalities between 1997 and 2005, and an average of 127 major incidents per year from 2006 to 2008. Using a complicated methodology, they estimated missing denominator data to calculate rates of risk over time and found that being an aid worker ranks as the fifth most dangerous civilian occupation in the US (with an average rate of five victims per 10,000 aid workers per year from 1995 to 2000 and six per 10,000 from 2000 to 2005). Yet, they claim, between 1997 and 2005 the *rates* of incidents did *not* rise dramatically over time even though the absolute number of violent

incidents against aid workers almost doubled in those years; the increase in overall numbers of aid workers essentially accounted for the difference.¹⁰ For the past three years (2006–8), this same finding does not hold, and in fact the numbers represent a startling and disturbing increase in both absolute numbers of incidents and the rate of violence. Their findings displace Barnett's conclusion cited above about a lack of hard evidence of increasing incidents. By disaggregating the numbers, they discovered the numbers of incidents are increasing overall, but particularly for national (versus international) staff and for NGO (versus ICRC and UN) aid workers. Furthermore, for the years 1997–2005 kidnappings and hostage-takings appeared to be a declining trend and 'ambushes at road blocks, firing on vehicles, banditry, car-jackings and other targeting of staff on the road remained by far the single most common means of violence against aid workers' (Stoddard et al., 2006: 14). For the years 2006–8, kidnappings and attacks against international staff both increased from the previous three years, and incidents in the three most dangerous contexts (Afghanistan, Somalia, and Sudan) accounted for the majority of the incidents (Stoddard et al., 2009).

The ODI/CIC study is one of the few empirical studies that examines deep causation through intentionality and an examination of specific contextual factors, including intensity of the conflict, presence of UN peacekeeping forces, global terrorist movement cells, regional or UN Security Council member forces, and the use of a UN integrated mission. Their analysis demonstrated that these six contextual variables had no significant impact on violence against aid workers (Stoddard et al., 2006: 17–19). The 'slight exception' to this finding is the presence of UN peacekeeping forces, as they report that, 'Where this variable was present, we saw a slight but statistically significant, *increase* in the number of international staff victims' (2006: 19). Furthermore, for the incidents for which it was possible to determine intention, political motives trumped economic motives. In other words, crime represented less of a threat in terms of serious violence than attempts to disrupt aid delivery or because of an association with a particular nationality or agenda (2006: 19). This same trend held for 2006–8 as well (Stoddard et al., 2009: 5).

Several additional projects, among them three dissertations, researched different elements of aid worker security. Bolletino examined attempts to create field security monitoring and reporting mechanisms within the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the challenges of standardizing these mechanisms in order to better address security incidents (Bolletino, 2001). In a policy document, he reported 228 security incidents for UNICEF globally between 1996 and 2000. Of these, 26 percent were violent in nature while 23 percent were accidents, and 23 percent targeted property (Bolletino, 2003). Abbott's research used available newswire sources to create a database of 1102 fatalities among aid workers between 1991 and 2004. She found the following trends: the highest number of fatalities occurred in Africa and among international governmental organization (IGO) personnel; insurgent groups perpetrated the greatest number of attacks; and 87 percent of the attacks were violent in nature (Abbott, 2006). Analysis of a subset of the same data set (729 fatalities from 1990 to 2000) confirmed many of these same findings: acute violence as the cause of 82 percent of the fatalities and accidents as the cause of 17 percent, and the highest number of fatalities in Africa. Non-governmental agencies as opposed to IGO personnel, however, suffered the highest number of deaths in this data

set (Abbott, 2005). Fast, meanwhile, examined risk factors related to NGO characteristics, including how an organization carried out its programs. In particular, among participating NGOs working with both sides of the conflict, integration into the local community, carrying out multiple types of activities combined with material aid, and operability appeared to heighten the level of insecurity. Based on a limited sampling of organizations in three different countries, her research pointed to the need for security management strategies that take into account the particular characteristics and operations of an organization (Fast, 2002, 2007).¹¹

Data from within the humanitarian community

Data emerging from the humanitarian community itself generally focuses on numbers and statistics. In a series of widely-cited reports, Dennis King examined sources available on ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int) to arrive at a compilation of incidents against civilian humanitarian-related organizations (local and international) and humanitarian assistance missions (including peacekeepers if providing security for a mission or convoy) between 1997 and 2001 (King, 2002a, b, c) and then again in 2003. His analysis revealed that more deaths are reported from acts of violence than from accidents, and highlighted the elevated risks associated with ambushes on vehicles and convoys. In addition, he found more fatalities among NGOs (59 percent) than the UN (41 percent) and among local staff (74 percent) than international staff (26 percent). In 2003, 76 aid workers died, 43 of whom were killed in 'terrorist-style or terrorist-affiliated' attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan (King, 2004).

The establishment of NGO security coordination offices in Afghanistan (the Afghanistan NGO Security Office, or ANSO), Iraq (the NGO Coordination Committee in Iraq, NCCI), and in Gaza, Somalia, and Sudan in recent years has facilitated the collection and dissemination of security incident reporting and security warnings. These coordinating bodies release incident data, but do not necessarily analyze the information beyond simple summaries or basic trends and patterns, lacking the time and even mandate to do so. In an April 2008 report, for example, ANSO documented 29 direct attacks against NGOs in Afghanistan in the first three months of 2008, with escalating severity of these attacks (Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, 2008; see also Afghanistan NGO Safety Office and CARE International, 2005).

The UN has also begun to collect data and use statistics to supplement its increasing emphasis on the safety and security of its staff, reporting these statistics in the annual report on the *Safety and Security of Humanitarian Personnel and Protection of UN Personnel*. The first report (United Nations, 2000) cited a total of 198 civilian staff killed in the line of duty due to malicious acts since 1992, including 21 during the previous reporting period. The latest report with a cumulative total (United Nations, 2005) noted 229 civilian staff killed since 1992. Although totals accumulate from year to year, discrepancies exist in how the UN agencies responsible for security (Office of the UN Security Coordinator [UNSECOORD]) and later UN Department of Safety and Security [UNDSS]) have calculated the numbers, since the numbers themselves fluctuate. The 2005 report lists 11 deaths in the previous reporting period, and 15 UN staff died in the August 2003 Baghdad bombing. When added to the 2001 total of 201 civilian deaths, these deaths, which do not include the fatalities from

the 2002 (10) or 2003 (5) reporting periods, bring the total above the figure of 229 from the 2005 report.

Related research

A complementary body of literature has developed alongside that reviewed above, mostly examining particular issues (for example, illness among expatriates, small arms and light weapons [SALW] use) and populations (for example, a specific NGO or region). These studies contribute to a wider understanding of aid worker victimization — outside of the focus on fatalities — and its impact on aid activities. One series of studies by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Small Arms Survey examined the impact of SALW on relief and development work. Their research suggested the availability of SALW caused increased insecurity in general, which inevitably hindered those working to assist those impacted by war and violence (Beasley et al., 2003; Muggah, 2001; Muggah and Berman, 2001). One report concluded, ‘Among humanitarian and development agencies themselves, small arms availability and use are threatening their operations, stakeholders, beneficiaries and local investments’ (Muggah and Berman, 2001: ix). A 2005 study of SALW specifically in relation to the work of relief and development personnel identified firearms as a subtle and deadly threat to humanitarians, with criminal violence as a significant threat and violence involving SALW commonly leading to the suspension of activities. Their study, based upon 2089 survey responses from 17 agencies in 96 countries and territories, named the occupied Palestinian territory, Uganda, and Iraq as the most dangerous places to work. It identified criminal acts as the primary threat to aid workers (Buchanan and Muggah, 2005). An earlier, smaller ICRC study of 41 delegates and SALW availability documented a similar finding, with more than one-half estimating armed security threats interrupted their work at least once per month (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1999).

A variety of studies look at illness — a safety issue — among expatriates, most often aid workers and journalists, and usually date back prior to those focusing on security incidents. Schouten and Brogdorff (1995), in examining mortality ratios among Dutch development workers, found their mortality to be 1.9 times that of the general Dutch population. In a study of the expatriate staff of a large refugee relief organization and its 38 staff in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Malaysia between 1981 and 1988, researchers concluded that 20 percent of expatriate workers were unavailable because of illness at any one time, and that infectious disease represented the most common illness (Lange et al., 1994). Ryan and Heiden (1990) studied 50 expatriate NGO relief workers in Sudan during 1984 and 1985 to learn more about the types and causes of illness. They found 43 illnesses among 28 individuals that resulted in the loss of two or more consecutive days of work, 14 evacuations (including five outside of Sudan), and one suicide attempt. In addition, 18 people left their assignment early. Their early study did not document security incidents but instead highlighted the difficult conditions and impact of relief work on individuals. Fortunately, most agencies have made significant progress since then in their ‘duty of care’ responsibilities.

Other studies similarly focus on particular populations. A study of Somali-based journalists and relief workers documented two aid worker deaths by gunshot between

December 1992 and February 1993. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents (104 journalists, 98 relief workers) reported illness negatively impacted their work performance (Sharp et al., 1995). In a news article, Carollo and Hopgood (2003) documented Peace Corps injuries and fatalities. Baker et al. (1992) investigated deaths overseas of American civilians between 1975 and 1984, and Howell (1990) conducted a study of health and safety issues among anthropologists doing fieldwork.

Conclusions about proximate cause from existing research

So what does the above review tell us? First, many of the individual studies emphasize the difficulty of collecting reliable information on this topic. The research caveats mentioned above and in the individual studies loom large in any attempt to make meaningful comparisons or to conduct a meta-analysis. Moreover, aside from a few notable exceptions, those reviewed above do not actually focus on the deep causes of violence against aid workers, making it difficult to accurately assess the validity of claims about causes and trends at a global level. Indeed, the ODI/CIC study claims six commonly cited contextual factors — deep causes — have no statistically significant impact on fatalities and severe violence. Instead, what we know about causation relates to proximate causes, or risk factors that are more context-specific. The studies above focus primarily on the epidemiological approach, including counts, rates, risk factors, and trends about who dies, where, and in what type of incident. Accurately assessing the intentionality of the act remains a vexing research problem.

Unfortunately, the data present some contradictory findings, particularly regarding who suffers more. Among those counting fatalities, King suggested NGO personnel die more often than UN personnel (59 percent versus 41 percent), and Abbott's research, depending on the time frame, proposed both IGOs and NGOs as experiencing the largest percentage of fatalities. Both rely upon news sources for their data. Sheik and colleagues reported NGO numbers increasing and UN and peacekeeper deaths stabilizing, and the ODI/CIC study conveyed a decrease in UN and ICRC fatalities, with a shifting burden to NGOs and from international to national staff between 1997 and 2005. From 2006 to 2008 this changed, with UN and NGO rates increasing, as did the rate of attacks against international staff. Both Abbott and Rowley report a greater risk from armed groups or insurgents as opposed to criminals, which the ODI/CIC study corroborates. Buchanan and Muggah, however, offer a contradictory assertion: 'Yet it is *criminal* violence committed with firearms — not attacks by armed combatants — that remains the most significant threat facing workers' (Buchanan and Muggah, 2005: 7–8; italics in original). Again, while it is difficult to compare numbers, these conflicting data demonstrate the challenges of research on this topic.

Nor does the research definitively lay to rest debates about the relative impact of security and safety incidents. While a number of studies (Abbott, 2006; King, 2002b, c; Rowley, 2005, 2007; Sheik et al., 2000; Stoddard et al., 2006) cite intentional violence as the cause of the majority of deaths, others (Lange et al., 1994; Martin, 1999; Peytremann et al., 2001; Ryan and Heiden, 1990) point to safety incidents as being more significant. Liability and publicity concerns, however, might be responsible for skewing these results in favour of reporting safety incidents and not security incidents (King, 2002c) even though security incidents, especially fatalities, receive more media attention.

Nevertheless, several patterns converge across studies. The numbers of incidents are increasing, even if the rates of violence fluctuate some over time. NGO staff appear to experience more risk, as do national staff (see Fast and Rowley, 2008). Intentional violence emerges as the leading cause of death (above 50 percent) in the majority of studies, with the exception of those that examined both morbidity and mortality. In other words, incorporating illness (for example, evacuations and missed work days) into the overall picture tends to reduce the import of violence for mortality figures. Personal correspondence with security officials corroborates this observation, since some maintain that accidents and illness represent a larger proportion of overall incidents and thus a bigger issue for security management. Bolletino proposes a similar distinction between scholars and policymakers, who emphasize the threat of targeted violence, and security managers, who point to criminal acts and safety incidents as most important (Bolletino, 2006).

While the findings above do not contradict these statements, it does confirm a disproportionate emphasis on severe violence in the research literature. Indeed, the emphasis on fatalities tends to skew the data in favour of violence and away from other types of risk that represent larger threats overall. In fact, in their study of perceptions of security among individual humanitarians, Fast and Wiest (2007) report that 70 percent of their sample experienced work stress, far and away the highest proportion of all threats, and recommend more attention on the 'lesser' security threats. The discussion of the higher numbers of politically versus economically motivated incidents in the ODI/CIC study also acknowledges this discrepancy:

This finding may seem to contradict aid workers' insistence that most of the threats they face are criminal rather than political, but it is not as counterintuitive as it may first appear. This data considers only major incidents of violence leading to grave outcomes, while the majority of economic crimes against aid workers and others — robberies, banditry, looting — can be carried out without the need for severe violence. (Stoddard et al., 2006: 19–20)

Other trends relate to risk factors. Most studies emphasize the high number of incidents in Africa, which Rowley suggests is a logical result of the higher proportion of aid worker staff in Africa.¹² Furthermore, traveling to and from project sites — and the associated risks of ambush and to drivers — appears as a significant risk across studies, from Rowley to King to Stoddard et al. Lastly, national staff bear the greatest burden of security incidents across studies.

Finally, some sources assert that the 'threat' is increasing, such as, for example, the 2003 UN report on Safety and Security (United Nations, 2003). Yet, perhaps somewhat contradictory, this same document reports that the number of fatalities decreased from the previous year. Other studies (Rowley, 2007; Stoddard et al., 2006) do indicate an increase in incidents, even if the overall rates of incidents are actually fairly stable.¹³ If, however, the intensity of the violence, the presence of military forces, or global terrorist movement cells have no impact on aid worker fatalities, as the ODI/CIC study suggests, and if other deep causes are virtually absent in the research, then it is difficult to conclude *based on empirical evidence* that these global factors significantly impact overall aid worker security.

Regardless, this sense of growing threat has yielded a heightened awareness of security concerns. The UN Safety and Security reports and other documents indicate an obvious change in attitudes about security over the past five years. In 2001, the UN reports emphasized promoting dialogue with communities and parties and the importance of humanitarian principles. After 11 September 2001, the 2002 report, unsurprisingly, focused on terrorism. By 2004, the shift to a more proactive stance on security is evident. In the years between, the emphasis moved from the impact of security on the ability of UN and humanitarian actors to provide assistance to those in need to the importance of security for interveners as an essential element of humanitarian action, more akin to a ‘personnel protection’ factor for humanitarians.¹⁴ What is unclear is the effect that security measures have had in mitigating threats and decreasing risk, and thus the numbers of incidents.

Explaining insecurity: A focus on ‘deep’ causes

Security has long been an issue for humanitarian actors, even if it has not always been recognized as such. Relief workers died or disappeared in the line of duty long before the appearance of security manuals. As early as the 1920s, Clayton Kratz, working for the then nascent relief and development organization Mennonite Central Committee, disappeared in Ukraine (Hiebert and Miller, 1929). Red Cross ambulances were bombed in Ethiopia in 1935–6¹⁵ and an ICRC plane was shot down in Biafra in June 1968 (Goetz, 2001). Fred Cuny, a celebrated relief worker, disappeared (and died) in Chechnya in 1995, allegedly for making public his analysis of and observations from the war there. One analyst proposed:

In Chechnya, Cuny combined multiple roles that are usually separated among several institutions in a division of labor ... Centralizing all these tasks in his own person, Cuny lost the protection that derives from dividing labor among many others. (DeMars, 2001: 206)

Books documenting aid workers’ experiences contain stories that highlight the dangers of their work (Bergman, 2003; Burnett, 2005; Cain et al., 2004; Danieli, 2002). Yet these sources are anecdotal as opposed to systematic narratives and chronicle individual and selected experiences, some of which even sensationalize incidents of violence.

The shooting of the six ICRC nurses in their beds in 1996 and the bombing of the UN compound in Baghdad in 2003 spurred and then accelerated a focus on security among relief and development actors. The first incident precipitated the notion of security as an essential element of humanitarian operations, and resulted in the development of security training manuals and management strategies (Bickley, 2003; Cutts and Dingle, 1995; Mayhew, 2004; Roberts, 1999; Rogers and Sytsma, 1998). The second incident resulted in further changes in security management strategies. Within policy and scholarly literatures, few devoted specific attention to the causes of security incidents prior to 2001, except as related to other factors such as the politicization of aid after the end of the Cold War. Common assumptions about deep causation are related to resources — bringing commodities into a resource-scarce environment — or blurred lines between combatants and civilians, or being ‘soft targets’ that are easier to attack than peacekeepers or other

military actors. After 9/11, this literature essentially internalized the assumption of a proliferation of incidents against and the targeting of aid workers, perhaps in part due to the extensive media coverage of incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan. In other words, security incidents appeared as a sidebar to discussions of the changing context within which humanitarian action takes place and were portrayed as a seemingly inevitable consequence of the new environment. In reality, however, the evidentiary base does not show a dramatic jump in the global *rate* of incidents until 2006, as explained above. This section examines the question of why security incidents happen, paying particular attention to the politicization and securitization of aid arguments in the 1990s and literature about the instrumentalization and militarization of aid in a post-9/11 context.

In the wake of the complex emergencies of the early 1990s, critics charged that the provision of humanitarian assistance served as a substitute for decisive political action in response to emerging complex emergencies. In some cases it even prolonged the violence (see for example, Anderson, 1999; Borton et al., 1996; Bryans et al., 1999; Duffield, 1997; Paul, 1999). The resulting 'politicization' of aid produced a series of mutually reinforcing factors and challenges to humanitarian action, including the loss of neutrality and impartiality, merged mandates, the association of NGO operations with military intervention, the privatization of assistance, and the proliferation of NGOs providing humanitarian assistance. It was precisely this politicization and the corresponding loss of neutrality and impartiality that, according to analysts, also resulted in the targeting of aid workers. In one analysis, the authors argued: 'The causes of the conflict become confused with international geopolitical agendas. One consequence is the increased targeting of aid workers by combatants' (Adams and Bradbury, 1995: 33–4). According to another: 'The refusal to acknowledge explicitly the political function of relief in conflict situations contributes to the maintenance of violence, playing into the hands of the powerful, while the politicization of humanitarian assistance, through selective provision and the militarization of delivery, increases the security threat to agencies' (Macrae and Zwi, 1994: 30). Furthermore, a consequence of the fluidity of conflict and alliances in the post-Cold War era is that 'providing humanitarian aid is more dangerous and often represents the acceptance of situations of high and continuous risk' (Duffield, 1997: 536).

A related trend is the 'securitization' of aid through the merging of the aid, development, and security agendas. Mark Duffield, a prolific proponent of this perspective, articulated the dangers of this approach. He argued that a 'fear of underdevelopment as a source of conflict, criminalised activity and international instability' has created a new humanitarianism that 'has invested developmental tools and initiatives with ameliorative, harmonising and transformational powers that, it is hoped, will reduce violent conflict and prevent its recurrence' (Duffield, 2001: 7, 11). In other words, in embracing a humanitarianism that departs from a singular focus on saving lives and relieving suffering, humanitarians have adopted a social transformation agenda that transcends its core principles. Others have expressed similar views. Macrae identified four groups attacking the humanitarian system and the basic principles of humanitarian action: the anti-imperialists, the realpolitikers, the developmentalists, and the peaceniks (Macrae, 1998). Each of these, she opined, attempted to co-opt humanitarian action for its own purposes and goals. Bouchet-Saulnier (2001) referred to the inclination to lump humanitarian action together with peacebuilding and peacekeeping as 'comforting, because it obscures the relatively

modest impact of humanitarian action in situations of conflict or crisis.’ Collectively these critiques imply that the dilution and undermining of core humanitarian principles and values have dangerous consequences, including attacks on aid workers. These deep cause explanations argue in favour of maintaining strict boundaries that safeguard the core principles of humanity, impartiality, operational independence, and neutrality.

After 9/11, the terms of the debate shifted somewhat and a primary challenge emerged in relation to the ‘global war on terror,’ particularly in relation to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whether or not the dynamics in these two countries represent an intensification of earlier patterns or an entirely new beast is a matter for discussion (Donini et al., 2004). Nevertheless, several arguments extend the claim that the core principles that underpin humanitarian action are eroding in the face of the global context. This happens in multiple ways: through the instrumentalization of aid, where assistance is yet another tool in a foreign policy arsenal, and through the militarization of aid, with its increasingly blurred boundaries between civilian and military actors. This results in two concerns: the ‘malaise in the humanitarian community and the *uneasy sense that the community is caught up in a chain of events over which it has no control*’ (Donini et al., 2004: 191; italics added by author).

More recent crises, and Afghanistan and Iraq in particular, have linked foreign policy objectives and humanitarian funding (Beattie, 2003) and the manipulation of humanitarian assistance for political aims (see also Hoffman and Weiss, 2006). Rieff’s analysis of Afghanistan exemplifies this perspective and its connection to attacks on aid workers. According to Rieff:

After the bombing began, it almost immediately became clear to what degree they associated the NGO with the great Western powers that financed them. It is not simply that foreign workers from groups like the IRC, Oxfam, MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières], and the others were expelled. Their offices, and those of the UN agencies, were targeted by Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and pro-Taliban mobs in Pakistan. For them, there was no distinction between the Western relief agencies and the U.S.-led coalition that was bombing Afghanistan. (Rieff, 2002: 250–1)

In writing about the Iraq war, Helton and Loescher (2003) reported that Andrew Natsios, head of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) at the time, indicated that NGOs interested in obtaining funding from the US government ‘should emphasise their links to the Bush administration.’¹⁶ Before the Baghdad bombing, they wrote:

This is the new stuff of foreign policy, where decision-makers are focusing on the reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq in a way seldom seen before. As a result, they are increasingly unwilling to depend on the well-intentioned but sometimes undirected efforts of humanitarian NGOs, and are insisting upon a greater degree of accountability and control.

This accountability and control took the form of linking aid to foreign policy objectives. For the few international NGOs remaining in Iraq, this has been a significant issue, also due to former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s infamous statement about NGOs being ‘force multipliers’ for the US military in Iraq. Powell’s statement explicitly linked these

sets of actors and their aims.¹⁷ More recently, President Obama's special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan suggested that 90 percent of US intelligence about the Taliban originated with NGOs.¹⁸ Larry Minear characterized the dilemma as one between operational independence or staying out of Iraq, or at least not accepting US or UK government funding. Nevertheless, choosing not to operate in a situation like Iraq carries its own dilemmas, since 'Staying home is not a comfortable option for groups committed to the humanitarian imperative' (Minear, 2003). The dilemma for many NGOs is the danger of association, and more specifically that accepting American funding in Iraq colors the independence and impartiality of their programming in other contexts where the US military is operating (Reynolds, 2003). Some US, European, and UK NGOs chose not to accept US or UK resources in order to maintain their independence.

The militarization of aid — or 'militarized charity' (Lischer, 2007) — represents a corollary argument to the instrumentalization perspective. One element relates to the loss of distinctions between soldier and civilians and the consequent risk for humanitarian actors. Indeed, the battlefields of contemporary conflict on which both soldiers and humanitarians operate 'now encompass villages and terror tactics [that] draw no distinction between soldier and civilian. This is evidenced by the rapid increase in the number of aid workers killed in combat zones' (Lischer, 2007: 101). A second element corresponds to the interactions between military and humanitarian actors, including armed escorts. This has generated significant discussion within the humanitarian community (see for example, Barry and Jefferys, 2002; Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group, 2001; Slim, 2001; Van Brabant, 2000). The US-led military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular have created unprecedented linkages between military and humanitarian actors, especially at the operational/field levels. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan that bring together military and security experts with development workers have been controversial in the humanitarian community for precisely this reason (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, 2002, 2003). On the one hand, military commanders argue the humanitarian and reconstruction activities are crucial to maintaining morale among their troops and providing 'force protection' for military actors. On the other, critics charge these types of activities blur the lines between humanitarian and military activities, especially when soldiers are out of uniform (Cater, 2002) or when NGOs take advantage of military personnel and equipment to carry out their own programming. In a January 2003 policy brief, CARE International in Afghanistan argued that Coalition forces should refrain from engaging in reconstruction activities because it 'distracts attention from their security role, risks undermining government capacity, and may put communities and civilian assistance workers at risk' (CARE International, 2003). Humanitarians bemoan the loss of independent and safe humanitarian space; they attribute this and attacks on aid workers, in part, to the militarization of aid and advocate the maintenance of boundaries between these different types of work.

In putting forth implicit or explicit arguments that associate increased attacks on aid workers with factors such as the politicization of aid or the decline of neutral or impartial humanitarian aid, analysts are essentially attributing attacks on aid workers and their causes to these more global and abstract factors. In short, the scholarly and policy-oriented literature tends to focus on contextual reasons to explain attacks on aid workers (Fast,

2002). While these 'deep causes,' located within global political dynamics and the structures and systems that underpin humanitarian action, may indeed contribute to violence against aid workers, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support these claims, as the discussion above demonstrates. Anecdotal evidence exists in abundance but is context- and situation-specific. Direct links between the decline of impartiality among humanitarian actors, for example, and increasing incidents of violence are difficult to uncover.

These deep causes, moreover, are external to or beyond the control of individual humanitarian actors, making humanitarians appear as passive actors in the face of the changing nature of conflict. Humanitarian actors may protest the blurring of boundaries between military and civilian humanitarian activities, but they cannot, by themselves, command changes from donors or military actors. They can advocate that military actors wear uniforms, for instance, but have no enforcement power in this matter. Advocacy efforts have resulted in changed guidelines, at least in the American context,¹⁹ but this does not always carry over into operational settings. In addition, this literature focuses on these global trends to the neglect of other important factors, such as individual behaviors or organizational actions that can lead to resentment or anger, and even violent attacks. For example, this literature does not take into account the hiring and firing practices of agencies that may contribute to or even cause resentment, possibly leading to violent incidents. These more micro-level factors, by contrast, fall within the influence of an individual or collectivity of humanitarian actors and therefore endow them with agency in a way that global, macro-level factors do not.

Implications for research and security management

Where does this leave us? One literature stream examines proximate causes and relies upon empirical evidence in making its claims, while a second stream focuses on macro explanations and deep causes, and uses primarily anecdotal evidence to support its claims. These literatures focus on different levels to explain the causes and risk factors related to security issues. A number of attempts to standardize and compile multiple data sources about security incidents have failed or faded into oblivion (Barnett, 2004: 69–70), inhibiting attempts to draw conclusions from a more comprehensive data set. Despite the growing interest in and number of research initiatives, researchers who have attempted to collect data on this topic agree that the obstacles are abundant and frustrating. The research, it seems, has not yet caught up with some claims in the literature, and given the challenges that plague this type of research, it appears unlikely to do so. A central problem is the dearth of accessible data; without more accurate data and analysis, we simply do not know.

Furthermore, the deep cause literature tends to focus on factors *external* to the realm of influence of individual or even a collective of humanitarian actors. This tendency obviates the contributions of the individual or organizational behaviors and actions, factors that fall within an agency's or individual's *internal* locus of influence. For example, a primary deep cause explanation for increased security incidents relates to the loss of impartiality and neutrality, whether a result of the politicization, militarization, securitization, or instrumentalization of aid. However, what is not clear is how they are connected. Impartiality is something that many aid workers and organizations believe

provides implicit protection from harm, but it is unclear to what extent belligerents evaluate or even take into account the perceived neutrality or impartiality of an agency. Do belligerents actually think about whether an organization is neutral or impartial or independent in choosing whom and where to attack? Or, are other factors to blame? One research project suggested 'working with both sides' in a conflict as a risk factor (Fast, 2002, 2007). While this could be explained by virtue of proximity to the fighting, it could also be due to 'helping the enemy.' Furthermore, some evidence exists that indicates that local populations do not even distinguish between NGO actors (Borton et al., 1996), and the distinctions between private security and various military actors in some places are murky at best. In one study of Afghanistan, local communities did not seem to care whether the assistance they received came from aid agencies or military actors (Donini et al., 2005). If this is true, we need to revisit assumptions about the inherent protective value of impartiality and neutrality. We do not know if aid workers and organizations are attacked because the attackers perceive an organization as helping the other side (partiality to one side) or because of the media attention that often accompanies an attack on humanitarians, or both, or whether it is related more to aid agencies being 'soft targets.' Even the proximate cause literature is contradictory on this point, with most studies agreeing on intentional violence as a major cause of violence (for example, Abbott, 2006; Rowley, 2007; Stoddard et al., 2006) and some insinuating criminal violence as a primary threat for humanitarians (Buchanan and Muggah, 2005; Sheik et al., 2000). The notion of criminal violence, as such, does not allude to any connection with impartiality or neutrality. It is one thing to imply an attack was political or targeted, and another to assume it is because of a loss of neutrality or impartiality. In truth, we know very little about the motivations and intentions of those who attack humanitarian workers, a central piece of the causation puzzle and a gaping hole in our knowledge.

One possible remedy lies in more standardized and accessible data, but even this will only provide partial information because motive and intention are either absent or assumed from such data. Without the arrest or prosecution of perpetrators, or, at a minimum, informal interviews of those who target aid workers, we are unlikely to gain such insight. Even so, data that are shared and scrubbed of personal details to protect privacy will allow for more tailored and therefore effective security management, since security managers will be able to adapt their strategies to respond to the plethora of threats and risks.

Intuitively, the reasoning that the militarization and securitization of aid, and even the loss of impartiality and neutrality, actually increases incidents is compelling. However, the evidentiary basis is not, at present, equally compelling even though anecdotal evidence does exist. The attacks on Western and particularly Scandinavian targets, including humanitarian agencies, following the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in September 2005 are a case in point. But these explanations detract from the other evidence and arguments that individuals' and organizational actions (or inaction), attitudes, and behaviors also contribute to security incidents. Gassmann (2005) echoes the notion that global causes are not necessarily to blame, yet this is still rare in published documentation. Privately, humanitarian security experts acknowledge the importance of individual behaviors and organizational action or inaction as contributing factors to security incidents. Yet, in the public domain, these same factors rarely appear, a reflection of the tendency to keep humanitarian action and those providing it above

reproach. Attention to the ‘why’ question, and especially attention to individual and organizational factors, very often collides with liability concerns. Several exceptions do exist, primarily in security manuals or best practices documentation that acknowledge the link between personal conduct and security incidents (for example, Barnett, 2004; Van Brabant, 2000). Yet one rarely if ever sees a news report that links agency hiring and firing practices or individual aid worker behavior to a security incident, even though security managers and aid workers themselves acknowledge the importance of these factors in unpacking aid worker victimization.²⁰ As yet this evidence is anecdotal, but it points to the importance of further research on these issues.

In practice, these discrepancies are important because of the implications for security management. Underlying assumptions and beliefs about cause and intention, including whether criminal or targeted violence is the central threat, influence how and with what mechanisms an agency protects its staff. To some extent the interpretations and responses analysts adopt reflect their own agendas or immediate concerns. For many Duanists and others who wish to maintain the integrity and privileged place of the classic humanitarian principles, the problem of humanitarian insecurity lies in the blurred boundaries between civilian and military actors or the politicization of aid, and the answer in better adherence to the impartiality, independence, and neutrality of assistance. For International Relations scholars analyzing the war on terror, the problem likely lies in global terrorist networks and their attacks on Western targets, and the solution in stronger responses to terrorism worldwide. Unsurprisingly, each of these interpretations serves the interpreter’s purpose. It is not that any of these are misinformed or faulty. Rather, this serves as a call for more awareness of the identities and stated or implied purposes of those interpreting the data. In reality, the problems and solutions are multiple and complex, involving a range of deep and proximate causes.

The obvious danger is that we develop policies and agendas that wrongly identify the problems and causes, and thus the appropriate and corresponding responses. In literature emphasizing factors outside the influence of agencies, humanitarians become reactive to external threats and passive actors subject to ‘forces outside their control.’ Translating this perspective into security management strategies would result in approaches that primarily or exclusively work to harden the target or deter attacks — a more militarized approach — as opposed to working proactively to gain community support for programs and activities. Ensuring community support places security management within the wider context of other programs and policies. In acknowledging the contributions of personal conduct and organizational policies, procedures, and programs to security issues, humanitarian actors regain a measure of control over their fates and serve as active participants and agents in their own safety and security. Security management strategies, therefore, become more contextualized and responsive to the particular threats and risks of the situation at hand. The answer, as many security managers know, is not in a one-size-fits-all approach, yet this is what an exclusive or even dominant focus on one type of threat will yield. More attention to underlying assumptions about cause and entertaining an openness to the complex interplay of deep and proximate causes and internal and external factors will contribute to more effective security management and, therefore, humanitarian action.

Notes

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1. The mental health consequences of aid work and 'staff care' issues are, in and of themselves, a growing area of practice and body of research and literature. The Antares Foundation and the Headington Institute, among others, have focused specifically on this issue, creating resources, sponsoring conferences, and conducting research. The website www.psychosocial.org offers a number of resources. Research also abounds on post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues among aid workers. For more, see: Smith et al. (1996), Barron (1999), McFarlane (2004).
2. Conversations with other researchers in this area, among them Marianne Abbott, Elizabeth Rowley, Abby Stoddard, and Katherine Haver, enhanced this discussion about the challenges of research on humanitarian security. Several reports (Barnett, 2004; Fast and Rowley, 2008; Rowley, 2007; Sheik et al., 2000; Stoddard et al., 2006) discuss many of these same challenges.
3. At least two of those who died were ICRC-employed Iraqi guards (Waddington, 2003).
4. One of these volunteers (Tom Fox) was murdered, while the remaining three (Jim Loney, Norman Kember, and Harmeet Singh) were eventually released.
5. Two of these, both men, were killed and two others, both women, were released early on. The Taliban released the remaining 19 later in August 2007 after negotiations, facilitated by the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society. The eventual agreement included a promise from South Korea to pull out its troops and not to send missionaries to the country as well as rumors of a ransom paid for the hostages' release (Rohde and Sang-Hun, 2007).
6. For example, the Independent Panel report on the Baghdad bombing highlighted discrepancies in staff numbers that complicated rescue efforts (Independent Panel, 2003). The ODI/CIC study (Stoddard et al., 2006: 5–9) contains a more extensive discussion of how they estimated the number of national and international staff in order to arrive at rates of violence against aid workers over time, whereas a Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (JHSPH) study (Rowley, 2007; Rowley et al., 2008) calculates rates only for those participating organizations that were able to provide complete denominator data.
7. My research assistant, Alicia Simoni, assisted in summarizing and compiling portions of the information presented in the following sections.
8. The Barnett report is part of the ECHO Security Review. All (2004 and 2006) documents and additional resources are available for download in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic from: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/evaluation/security_review_en.htm.
9. While this number is similar to that of the ODI/CIC study, major differences exist in the methods used to calculate these numbers. As a result, they are not comparable. See original studies for more details.
10. Although the ODI/CIC report represents the most comprehensive data set available to date, a number of methodological limitations to their study exist. First, they estimated staff totals for more than one-half of their sample. Only 32 percent of participating organizations (UN, ICRC, and NGO) provided fully disaggregated data, while a further 26 percent

provided partial data. The remainder they estimated via ‘systematic inferencing.’ For those who provided partial data, they used overseas program expenditures and staffing totals for available years to calculate a ratio of program expenditure to staffing for the missing years. For the remainder, they used budget totals and an average expenditure-to-staff ratio to calculate staffing totals, arguing this provided reliable-enough data upon which to calculate rates. Based on these calculations, they estimate an increase of 77 percent in the number of aid workers between 1997 and 2005. Second, their analysis of the ‘deep causes,’ or explanations for aid worker victimization, is based upon case studies of the six most dangerous contexts for aid workers: Afghanistan, Chechnya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Somalia and Somaliland, and Sudan (Stoddard et al., 2006: 7–9).

11. A plethora of other sources focus on security issues but do not necessarily report on research (for example, Bruderlein and Gassman, 2006; Gent, 2002; Greenaway and Harris, 1998).
12. Based on the data, Rowley reports that the Middle East and South/Central Asia regions have proportionally higher numbers of intentional violence cases relative to the overall number of cases for these regions.
13. Even though the years 2006–8 saw a ‘spike’ in the numbers of incidents, the data indicate this is attributable to the rise in incidents in the three most dangerous contexts — Afghanistan, Somalia, and Sudan. When these three are removed from the equation, the rate actually decreases slightly (from: 2.7/10,000 in 2003–5 to 2.4/10,000 in 2006–8 — see Stoddard et al., 2009: 4).
14. I credit Larry Minear for suggesting the term ‘personnel protection’ as the humanitarian equivalent to ‘force protection’ within the military.
15. The 1936 issues of the *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge* document multiple bombings of ambulances during the Italian–Ethiopian conflict.
16. The two were meeting with UN Special Representative Sergio DeMello at the time of the 2003 Baghdad bombing. Arthur Helton died and Gil Loescher was severely injured in the attack.
17. Colin Powell, ‘Secretary of State Colin L. Powell Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations,’ 26 October 2001. Available from: www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept_11/powell_brief31.htm.
18. Robert Burns, ‘Envoy laments weak US knowledge about Taliban,’ Associated Press, 7 April 2009. Available from: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=7280988>.
19. See the ‘Guidelines for relations between US Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in hostile or potentially hostile environments.’ This publication of the US Institute of Peace is the result of discussions involving representatives from InterAction and the US Department of Defense (available at: www.usip.org/pubs/guidelines.html).
20. I base this statement on personal interviews and stories conducted with relief and development workers and security managers over a three-year period (2004–7).

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