



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2019/104

Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

**The Mission needed to establish an
accountability mechanism for reporting all
incidents in a timely manner and provide
training to Mission personnel for facilitating
integrated scenario-based exercises**

**11 November 2019
Assignment No. AP2019/633/05**

Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the operations of the Joint Operations Centre. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019 and included a review of situational awareness, integrated operations coordination and crisis management support.

UNMISS needed to ensure systematic and timely reporting of incidents and provide training to Mission personnel for facilitating integrated scenario-based exercises.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNMISS needed to:

- Establish an accountability mechanism to ensure that all incidents are reported in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise system in a timely manner and regularly review the incidents recorded for their accuracy;
- Maintain adequate documentation on the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings to preserve institutional knowledge and follow up on the implementation of action points and decisions on coordinated operational activities; and
- Provide guidance and training material to facilitators of scenario-based exercises, integrate and coordinate common scenario-based exercises requiring the participation of all Mission components, and monitor implementation of related recommendations.

UNMISS accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

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Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
2. Security Council resolution 2459 (2019) authorizes UNMISS to implement a coordinated approach to information gathering, monitoring, verification, early warning and dissemination, and response mechanisms, including those related to threats and attacks against civilians in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. UNMISS is also required to prepare for potential attacks on United Nations personnel and facilities.
3. The Joint Operations Centre (JOC) located at Mission Headquarters is an essential component of the Mission's senior leadership support mechanism that enables decision-making through integrated situational awareness from routine and special incident reporting. JOC is also responsible for: (a) liaising with the Mission Support Centre (MSC) to coordinate appropriate logistical support to operational activities; (b) supporting and integrating Mission-wide contingency plans; and (c) supporting the Mission's crisis management. JOC is the information hub of the Mission and its work focuses on integrated situational awareness on current events with a time horizon of up to 72 hours.
4. UNMISS has 10 Field Integrated Operations Centres (FIOCs), which were previously called the State Operations Centres. FIOCs are responsible for reporting incidents as they occur and for submitting daily and weekly situational reports to JOC. They are also responsible for providing situational awareness, integrated operations coordination and crisis management in field offices, and gathering and dissemination of information on protection of civilian sites.
5. JOC is headed by a Chief at the P-5 level who reports to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General through the Chief of Staff. JOC has 12 approved posts comprising 8 international posts and 4 United Nations Volunteers. The approved travel budget of JOC for the fiscal years 2017/18 and 2018/19 was \$29,858 and \$35,943 respectively.
6. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the operations of JOC in UNMISS.
8. This audit was included in the 2019 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the key role that JOC plays in supporting decision-making by senior leadership of the Mission through its provision of situational awareness and potential high-risk events that may adversely impact the implementation of the UNMISS mandate.
9. OIOS conducted this audit from June to August 2019. The audit covered the period from July 2017 to June 2019. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the operations of JOC, including situational awareness, integrated operations coordination, and crisis management support.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of incidents reported; and (d) substantive testing of controls related to incident and periodic situational awareness reporting on a sample basis.

11. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Situational awareness

The Mission needed to ensure all incidents are captured in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise system in a timely manner

12. JOC is mandated to provide comprehensive integrated situational awareness to the Mission leadership team in routine and special incident reporting.

13. JOC utilized information in the daily situational reports and weekly situational reports submitted by FIOCs to provide daily briefings on current events to the Mission's senior management team. OIOS review noted that briefings: (a) were delivered in a timely manner, i.e. daily or more often as the situation dictated, and according to senior management requests; and (b) facilitated decision-making related to events that posed high risks to the implementation of the UNMISS mandate.

14. To enable improved situational awareness, in December 2016, UNMISS implemented a standardized and centralized web-based information management system, called the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system. This system allows Mission components to directly log incidents, events and operational activities related to their areas of expertise. SAGE also integrates and stores information from across the Mission and enables trend analysis. JOC was responsible for implementing and managing SAGE, and during the audit period, 9,897 incidents were recorded in the system by various Mission components.

15. However, OIOS observed the following deficiencies in the management and maintenance of SAGE:

- Although the requirement to use SAGE for all incident reporting was communicated during various meetings and through email reminders, key Mission components, including Force Headquarters, United Nations Police, Safety and Security Section, Human Rights Division, and Civil Affairs Division did not report incidents and events in the system. For example, SAGE did not capture 1,758 (or 61 per cent) of the 2,879 incidents and events reported by FIOCs in their daily situation reports from January to June 2019. JOC had followed up on this issue with heads of field offices in January and February 2019 and escalated it to the Chief of Staff in March 2019. However, OIOS review of all monthly compliance reports prepared by JOC in July and August 2019 showed that reporting of incidents in SAGE did not show much improvement as 54 per cent were still not recorded in SAGE;
- There were delays in capturing incidents in SAGE. A review of 93 of the 9,897 incidents reported in the system showed delays ranging between 1 and 18 days, contrary to the requirement to report incidents within 24 hours of occurrence;

- Heads of field offices did not always approve incidents reported by FIOCs. For example, during the audit period, 475 of the 9,897 incidents reported were not approved, which precluded substantive sections and other Mission components from accessing the information for their analysis and reporting; and
- There were 567 duplicate entries in the system, which led to inaccurate statistics such as the number of incidents and casualties reported in field locations.

16. The above occurred because: (a) UNMISS had not established an accountability mechanism to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in SAGE across the Mission; and (b) JOC did not regularly review incidents reported in SAGE for accuracy. As a result, the Mission could not effectively maintain a comprehensive dashboard of incidents, detect correlations, and analyze trends.

(1) UNMISS should: (a) establish an accountability mechanism to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system across the Mission; and (b) regularly review the incidents recorded in the SAGE system to ensure accuracy.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Mission SAGE standard operating procedures (SOPs) approved in April 2018 clearly established the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing SAGE. The Mission, however, would review the implementation of the SOPs, particularly on accountability aspects, and issue clarification or additional guidance, as required to ensure regular review and accuracy of the incidents reported. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that an accountability mechanism has been established to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in the SAGE system and that the system is regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy of information recorded.

B. Integrated operations coordination and crisis management support

There was a need to document outcomes of the integrated operations coordination meetings

17. To facilitate integrated operations coordination and information flow within the Mission, JOC was co-located with the Joint Mission Analysis Centre, the Security Operations Centre, the Police Operations Centre, the Integrated Operations Centre (IOC), the Tactical Operations Centre and the Force Intelligence Unit, and was in proximity with the Military Operations Centre.

18. To integrate and coordinate contingency planning and enhance the Mission's preparedness for potential crisis events, JOC worked through the Technical Working Group (TWG), which met weekly and was chaired by the Chief of Staff and comprised all Mission components. OIOS reviewed 11 minutes of the TWG meetings for the period April to June 2019, which showed that JOC had followed up on the implementation of recommendations made by the TWG and sought feedback from representatives of the military and police components on their plans for conducting field training exercises as part of uniformed personnel preparedness to respond effectively to crisis situations. Minutes of the TWG meetings for the period from July 2016 to March 2019 were not available because the Mission was in the process of recovering the files following a corrupted data storage system.

19. As part of integrated operations coordination, JOC liaised with national authorities to obtain flight safety assurances for UNMISS aircraft to operate in South Sudan. In addition, when major incidents occurred in field locations resulting in severe injuries to Mission personnel, JOC coordinated with the Medical and Aviation Sections to ensure prompt medical evacuation of the affected personnel.

20. Through its role in integrated operations coordination, JOC facilitated weekly coordination meetings within the Mission, where representatives from across all relevant Mission components provided briefings on their operations and activities. While relevant Mission components confirmed attending these meetings on a regular basis, there was no evidence that: (a) issues of potential concern were identified in the meetings; (b) JOC had coordinated operational activities with the Mission components based on tasking from the senior leadership team, Mission mandates and agreed overarching priorities; and (c) planned response options were subsequently recommended to the senior leadership team. This was because action points arising from the weekly coordination meetings were not documented, as UNMISS considered these meetings to be informal gatherings and did not see the need to maintain any formal documentation.

(2) UNMISS should maintain adequate documentation on the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings to preserve institutional knowledge and ensure follow-up on the implementation of action points and decisions on coordinated operational activities.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the weekly JOC coordination meetings were an information sharing, situation awareness and coordination platform for all the Mission components, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and the protection cluster. The Mission further added that the JOC coordination meetings were not forums for decision-making. However, UNMISS would consider ways to establish written records of key points and agreed follow-up actions from these meetings. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the Mission has implemented measures to maintain adequate documentation of action points of the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings.

JOC effectively supported the Mission Crisis Management Team but there was a need to improve the facilitation of scenario-based exercises

21. JOC is mandated to coordinate Mission's activities related to crisis preparedness and provide support to the Crisis Management Team (CMT) by alerting it of impending crisis, providing situational awareness briefings and maintaining operational readiness of the CMT meeting venue.

22. JOC provided secretariat support to CMT, maintained the list of CMT members and their alternates, including contact details, and maintained operational readiness of the CMT meeting venue at the United Nations House Compound in Juba by ensuring availability of the meeting venue and facilities, such as video and teleconference linking relevant CMT members. JOC also maintained an alternate venue at the Tomping compound in the event the primary venue was affected. Review of all minutes of 14 CMT meetings held during the audit period showed that JOC alerted senior management of crisis situations through the issuance of flash reports, provided situational awareness briefings, and documented action points based on CMT decisions and followed up on the implementation of these action points. Based on this, OIOS concluded that JOC effectively supported the Mission's CMT.

23. During the period from July 2018 to June 2019, JOC facilitated scenario-based exercises such as Table Top Exercises (TTXs) and Rehearsal of Concept drills in Mission Headquarters in Juba to test the contingency plans. However, there was no evidence that after-action review reports (AARs) were prepared for the TTXs in Juba to ensure that gaps were identified and weaknesses were addressed.

24. During the audit period, the Mission organized 61 TTXs in the 10 field offices. JOC facilitated 40 of these, but starting from January 2018, the responsibility for conducting TTXs was transferred to the field offices, with JOC coaching field offices in conducting them. JOC and FIOC team leaders established objectives of the exercises and developed scenarios based on early warning indicators identified for the specific field office location/environment. However, as of 30 June 2019, field offices had not submitted 21

of the 61 AARs to JOC and the Mission's Policy and Best Practices Officer, as required. OIOS review of 40 AARs for TTXs conducted by JOC and FIOC in the field offices showed the following:

- The main purpose of the AAR is to communicate lessons learned from the TTX, identify gaps in the policies or contingency plans, and propose recommendations to address the gaps. However, discussions of scenarios related to the physical protection of civilians during 35 of the 40 TTXs were not tailored to existing relevant Mission policy documents and guidelines, and the AARs did not describe the deliberations that took place during the exercises to assess whether the participants were familiar with existing policies and guidelines. Hence, there was no assurance that the participants had adequate capacity to execute their functions in the event of an actual crisis;
- Civilian Mission components planned and conducted their exercises in isolation, without adequate coordination and integration with the military and police components and vice versa. For example, while JOC was facilitating TTXs for field offices, the military and police components were planning and facilitating separate field training exercises, sometimes in the absence of key substantive sections, such as the Safety and Security Section, the Medical Section and the United Nations Individual Police Officers, which would normally be involved in the actual crisis; and
- Implementation of TTX recommendations was not monitored because the Mission did not have a follow-up system in place and FIOC team leaders did not assign individuals responsible for implementing the recommendations made within a specific date.

25. The above resulted because the Office of the Chief of Staff had not: (a) ensured training or guidance was provided to facilitators of scenario-based exercises; (b) established a mechanism for monitoring implementation of TTX recommendations; and (c) adequately followed up on integration of the scheduling and facilitation of scenario-based exercises. Consequently, there was a risk that the Mission would not be able to effectively address gaps identified in contingency plans and respond to crisis situations.

(3) UNMISS should: (a) develop guidance and training material for facilitators of scenario-based exercises; (b) take action to ensure that common scenario-based exercises that require the participation of all Mission components are integrated and coordinated; and (c) establish a mechanism to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would develop guidance and training material which include the requirement for integrating relevant Mission components, and a mechanism to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations, involving the Integrated Mission Training Centre, Best Practices Unit and all relevant Mission components. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that guidance and training material have been developed for and used by facilitators, common exercises are integrated, and that a mechanism has been established to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

26. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNMISS for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNMISS should: (a) establish an accountability mechanism to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system across the Mission; and (b) regularly review the incidents recorded in the SAGE system to ensure accuracy.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that an accountability mechanism has been established to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in the SAGE system and that the system is regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy of information recorded.	31 December 2019
2	UNMISS should maintain adequate documentation on the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings to preserve institutional knowledge and ensure follow-up on the implementation of action points and decisions on coordinated operational activities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has implemented measures to maintain adequate documentation of action points of the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings.	31 December 2019
3	UNMISS should: (a) develop guidance and training material for facilitators of scenario-based exercises; (b) take action to ensure that common scenario-based exercises that require the participation of all Mission components are integrated and coordinated; and (c) establish a mechanism to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that guidance and training material have been developed for and used by facilitators, common exercises are integrated, and that a mechanism has been established to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations.	31 December 2019

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

³ C = closed, O = open

⁴ Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response



To: Mr. Daeyoung Park
Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Date: 4 November 2019

FROM: David Shearer
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

SUBJECT: **Response to the Draft Report on an Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2019/633/05)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the draft report referenced OIOS-2019-633/xx, dated 15 October 2019, on the Audit of the Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2019/633/05).
2. Please find attached the UNMISS comments on the recommendations of the draft report provided in Appendix 1.
3. Thank you for your consideration and support

cc: Mr. Paul Egunsola, Chief of Staff, UNMISS
Ms. Victoria Browning, Director of Mission Support, UNMISS
Mr. Timothy Crowley, Deputy Director of Mission Support, UNMISS
Mr. Per Ronning, Chief, Joint Operations Centre, UNMISS
Mr. Naoki Ishikawa, Officer-In-Charge, Strategic Planning Unit, UNMISS
Mr. Joel Beasca, Audit Focal Point, UNMISS
Mr. James Suglo, Chief Resident Auditor, Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo, Professional Practices Section, IAD, OIOS

Management Response

Audit of Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNMISS should: (a) establish an accountability mechanism to ensure systematic and timely reporting of all incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system across the Mission; and (b) regularly review the incidents recorded in the SAGE system to ensure accuracy.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff Chief, Joint Operations Centre	31 Dec 2019	The UNMISS SAGE SOP approved in April 2018 clearly establishes roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in implementing SAGE. The Mission, however, will review the implementation of the SOP, particularly on the accountability aspect, and issue clarification or additional guidance, as required, to ensure regular review and accuracy of the incidents reported.
2	UNMISS should maintain adequate documentation on the weekly integrated operations coordination meetings to preserve institutional knowledge and ensure follow-up on the implementation of action points and decisions on coordinated operational activities.	Important	Yes	Chief, Joint Operations Centre	31 Dec 2019	The weekly JOC coordination meeting is an information sharing, situation awareness and coordination platform for all the Mission components as well as representatives from NGOs and the Protection Cluster. It is not a forum to make decisions. The Mission will consider ways to establish written records of key points and agreed follow-up actions from the meetings.
3	UNMISS should: (a) develop guidance and training material for facilitators of scenario-based exercises; (b) take action to ensure that common scenario-based exercises that require the participation of all Mission components are integrated and	Important	Yes	Chief, Joint Operations Centre	31 Dec 2019	The Mission will develop guidance and training material, which include the requirement for integrating relevant Mission Components, and a mechanism to monitor implementation of AAR

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

Management Response

Audit of Joint Operations Centre in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	coordinated; and (c) establish a mechanism to monitor implementation of after-action review recommendations.					recommendations, involving the IMTC, Best Practices Unit and all relevant Mission components.