OIOS
Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2020/025

Audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

There were control weaknesses in security culture, advice and support, security workforce, training and governance and oversight

21 September 2020
Assignment No. AR2019-167-01

Audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The objective of the audit was to assess whether effective strategic and governance arrangements were in place for security management at UNHCR. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 and included a review of: (a) security culture; (b) advice and support; (c) security workforce; (d) governance and oversight; (e) liaison and partnerships; and (f) training.

As a front-line humanitarian agency and a workforce of about 15,000, UNHCR was delivering services to persons of concern across the world including in some very insecure environments. Despite the increasing number of attacks on the humanitarian sector, UNHCR had seen declining casualties and, in the last three years, had not suffered any malicious fatality in the line of duty. UNHCR had also satisfactorily implemented liaison and partnership arrangements with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and stakeholders in the United Nations Security Management System. However, improvements were needed to further enhance safety and security measures in UNHCR.

OIOS made five recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNHCR needed to:

- Reinforce the security culture and update its security policy;

- Improve arrangements for security advice and support to Regional Bureaux and field operations;

- Strengthen the management of the security workforce;

- Prioritize completion of mandatory security training and security certification programmes; and

- Ensure adequate governance and oversight of safety and security.

UNHCR accepted the recommendations, implemented one recommendation and initiated action to implement the remaining four.

CONTENTS

Audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

2.   The primary responsibility for the security and protection of personnel employed by United Nations system organizations, their spouses, other recognized dependents and property rests with the host government. Ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel is an integral part of the concept of 'duty of care' which is defined as 'a non-waivable duty of the part of the Organization to mitigate or otherwise address foreseeable risks that may harm or injure its personnel and eligible staff members'.

3.   UNHCR is an active member of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) and the associated oversight body, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN). The High Commissioner is responsible for ensuring the goals of UNSMS are met by instituting a robust security management system duly observing the key principles of determining acceptable risk, providing adequate resources to manage risks, and ensuring adherence to security policies and procedures. The 2012 UNHCR Security Management Policy (2012 Policy) outlines the security management structure defining the roles and responsibilities of key actors of the UNHCR security management system. UNHCR's strategy to strengthen the security for its personnel, partner staff and persons of concern (PoC) is detailed in a document titled the "Culture of security 2017-2019: an updated plan of action"; hereinafter referred to as 'the Action Plan'.

4.   The High Commissioner's managerial oversight over security management is exercised through the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations (AHC-O). The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), the UNHCR's designated Security Focal Point, oversees and provides strategic direction and guidance on security matters supported by the Field Security Service (FSS). The total expenditure related to staff safety and security from 2017 to 2019 was $310 million or 2.4 per cent of the total UNHCR expenditure for the three-year period. UNHCR recorded 404, 313 and 320 security incidents for 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. In 2019, the implementation of security arrangements was supported by 313 security staff globally which included: 9 staff in FSS headed by a Head of Service at the D-1 level; 7 staff in Regional Bureaux; and 297 staff in 130 other locations.

5.   Comments provided by UNHCR are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6.   The objective of the audit was to assess whether effective strategic and governance arrangements were in place for security management at UNHCR.

7.   This audit was included in the 2019 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the criticality of ensuring a balance between programme delivery and the safety and security of UNHCR personnel and assets.

8.   OIOS conducted this audit from November 2019 to March 2020. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered

higher risk areas pertaining to: (a) security culture; (b) advice and support; (c) security workforce; (d) governance and oversight; (e) liaison and partnerships; and (f) training.

9.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) review of relevant financial data and documentation from Managing for Systems, Resources and People, the UNHCR enterprise resource planning system; (c) review of security related documents and reports; (d) group discussions and surveys; and (e) sample testing of controls.

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

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

A.   Security culture

<u>There was a need to strengthen the culture of security within UNHCR and update the UNHCR Security Management Policy</u>

11.   Organizational culture is the system of shared actions, values and beliefs that guide the behaviour of staff members. A culture of security comprises a wide range of behaviours, practices and attitudes, and envisages that: (a) safety and security is ingrained into all aspects of UNHCR operations; (b) managers ensure the adoption of a security culture in alignment with the Organization's security policies; (c) adequate resources are provided for security; and (d) staff members understand and accept inherent security risks in the work of UNHCR.

12.   In line with the Action Plan, FSS envisaged a strengthened security culture based on sound risk management practices to enable UNHCR to deliver its programmes safely and effectively. Nonetheless, the following examples suggested that strengthening the security culture within UNHCR needed long-term efforts backed by strong and sustained managerial commitment.

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- Training and learning play an important role in strengthening the security culture, and therefore, compliance rates for mandatory safety and security training directly impacted staff behaviours, practices and attitudes, an area discussed under Section B 'Security strategic management'.

- Of fundamental importance is the behaviour of managers who are a crucial element in augmenting the culture of security and in ensuring effective security management. The audit noted that some managers did not always lead by example and take proactive action in ensuring that staff were fully aware of security related issues, and the need to adhere to policies and procedures. For example, 32 Representatives/Deputy and Assistant Representatives, and 9 Heads of Office (Sub/Field Office) out of 344 had not completed the mandatory 'BSAFE' training. Of the 186 managers required to complete the Security Management Team (SMT) training, 108 (58 per cent) ranging from P-4 to D-2 had not taken the training. Also, 28 per cent of managers required to attend the Security Management Learning Programme (SMLP) training had not done so.

- Three of the 5 Regional Bureaux Directors interviewed committed to ensure full compliance of mandatory security training and SRMM by the country operations under their responsibility. The other two Directors were of the view that it was an issue delegated to Representatives of country operations, and on their part, they ensured Representations compiled country operations' SRMM compliance reports and submitted them regularly to FSS.

- At the country level, 9 of the 12 Representatives/Deputy Representatives interviewed agreed that safety and security of staff was a priority and stated that they were committed to ensure full implementation of mandatory training and SRMM. However, three Representatives/Deputy Representatives assigned to operations with substantial security risks considered compliance with mandatory security training as a matter for Administration to follow up on. These Representations did not ensure staff compliance with mandatory security courses and 2 of the 3 offices were not fully compliant with SRMM.

13.   The UNHCR regulatory framework on security was outdated. UNHCR established its policy on security management in 2012, but the Policy had since been overtaken by time and events. UNHCR's planned revision of the Policy had been delayed due to institutional constraints, including factors such as the moratorium of policies within UNHCR and the decentralization and regionalization process. FSS informed that the revision, now initiated, had identified specific areas that needed to be updated. In OIOS opinion, the revised Policy needed to consider responsibilities and accountabilities of FSS, Divisions, Regional Bureaux and country operations in safety and security matters in the revised decentralized and regionalized structure.

14.   As effective organizational culture is a significant driver for safety and security, OIOS was of the view that it was an area that UNHCR needs to strengthen. This was because all UNHCR managers did not always consider safety and security as a fundamental element to be embedded in operational decisions and take proactive measures to ensure their staff were fully aware of safety and security issues. UNHCR also did not ensure that security policies and procedures were updated in a timely manner.

> **(1)   The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to reinforce the security culture in UNHCR by: (a) updating the existing UNHCR Security Management Policy; (b) enhancing internal messaging highlighting the responsibility of managers to lead by example in safety and security matters; and (c) improving compliance with security policies and measures.**
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> *UNHCR accepted recommendation 1 and stated that: (a) the updated UNHCR Security Management Policy would be released in October 2020; (b) internal messaging on security had increased and would be part of the rollout of the revised Security Policy; and (c) the results of compliance and follow up actions on SRMM in line with AHC-O's message to the Bureau Directors would be reviewed, and overall compliance reassessed in September 2020.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence of: (i) the issuance of the revised policy and requisite internal messaging; (ii) increase in the number of senior managers and staff compliant with required training; and (iii) overall improved compliance levels with security policies and measures.

B.   Security strategic management

<u>There was a need to strengthen arrangements for advice and support on safety and security</u>

15.   FSS is responsible for providing: (i) advice and analysis to the High Commissioner and other managers on safety and security; and (ii) technical guidance and support in ensuring that security is a core

component of its global operations including review of security-related resource requirements and adherence to SRMM. Field Security Advisers (FSAs) at headquarters provide: (i) advice and support to Regional Bureaux, including analysis of possible threats to staff and operations in their region and assessment of security gaps and solutions; and (ii) direct support to field operations through security audits, training, technical advice and guidance. FSS also provides safety and security advice and analysis to the High Commissioner through its annual presentation to the Senior Management Committee (SMC). Additionally, FSS visited between 50 to 60 field locations each year for various reasons.

16.   As of July 2019, FSS reported SRMM compliance[1] at 98 per cent (92 per cent in December 2018). The 98 per cent compliance rate was made up of: (a) 74 per cent of offices that were designated as fully compliant, but also included offices which had deviations from prescribed requirements; and (b) 24 per cent of offices with a status of compliant with limitations[2]. A review of 5 of the 12 Representations declared by FSS as fully compliant, showed for example, inadequate compliance with mandatory security training. FSS clarified that "compliant" should be understood as meaning an office meets all critical requirements and has deviations from other requirements. FSS added that, given the detailed MOSS/SRMM requirements, an expectation that offices would be 100 per cent compliant was difficult to achieve. In OIOS' view, there is a risk that field offices are incorrectly assessed due to the subjectivity in the rating system whereby an office could be categorized as 'compliant' or 'compliant with limitations', although it may not have met important or even mandatory requirements.

17.   Additionally, it was not yet clear what changes were necessary for FSS to deliver on its mandate in the new decentralized and regionalized context. For instance: (a) how FSS along with others, would achieve the right balance between its role of global oversight of security matters and the new regionally empowered and autonomous Regional Bureaux; (b) if the Organization's security oversight function (performed by DESS/FSS) had the tools and authorities needed to meet senior management's expectations in the new structure; and (c) who would be responsible for the annual SRMM compliance review, and annual Country Operations Plan/Annual Programme Review analysis. FSS advised that due to the new structure and delegated authorities, it was concerned about its ability to support the SRMM compliance review, although it was accountable for the SRMM results. This was because FSS no longer had authority over FSAs who were responsible for producing the SRMM compliance review results. This may impact the implementation of SRMM globally and its reporting thereof.

18.   While the 2012 Policy specified the role of a field FSAs to provide advice and support to the Representative, the 12 Representatives/Deputy Representatives interviewed mentioned that the FSA roles and responsibilities were not always clear in practice. For instance, Representatives knew that FSAs were responsible for providing periodic security briefings, analysis of emerging security threats and appropriate mitigating measures, but they were not clear on their roles for other equally crucial SRMM components, such as the status of compliance with SRMM including mandatory basic and managerial level security training, Travel Request Information Process clearance and radio checks.

19.   Moreover, the advice and support to Bureaux on budgeting matters, whilst competently delivered, were not always effective because FSS recommendations were not systematically implemented. OIOS noted recurring issues raised by FSS such as: (i) security budgets not being adequately funded; (ii) cost centres existing that had no security budget; and (iii) lack of security budget details.

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[1] UNHCR's method of categorizing compliance, i.e. as compliant, compliant with limitations and non-compliant, originated in the interagency approach taken by UNDSS, which until 2016 conducted compliance audits globally, using a scoring system of 90-100 per cent as fully compliant; 80-90 per cent as compliant with limitations; and below 80 per cent as non-compliant.
[2] This means there are limited deficiencies, or FSS has concerns regarding suitability of measures.

20.   Currently therefore, responsibilities were not adequately aligned with delegated authorities. The structural gaps and lack of clarity over responsibilities may increase the risk of ineffective advice and support to Regional Bureaux and field operations. In October 2019, UNHCR set out the shared roles, accountabilities and authorities for all Divisions while noting that Divisions would be given the opportunity to provide accountabilities and authorities related to their specific functions. OIOS is of the opinion that the gaps identified in this audit could be addressed in a document outlining the specific roles, accountabilities and authorities for DESS/FSS.

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(2)   The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations with support from the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply and in cooordination with Regional Bureaux should define the Field Security Service's responsibilities in the decentralized and regionalized context including in terms of supporting the security oversight function with the necessary tools and authorities to minimize gaps in the provision of advice and support, and the monitoring of its effectiveness.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 2 and stated that DESS had begun a comprehensive review of processes and procedures where responsibilities had changed under regionalization. In addition, DESS would define standard procedures for fulfilling its monitoring and oversight functions in the regionalized structure, including a structured oversight for both desktop review from Headquarters, onsite monitoring and support missions. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that: (a) gaps have been addressed in the provision of safety and security advice with clearly defined FSS accountabilities in a regionalized context, including the necessary tools and authorities; and (b) the provision of effective advice and support to Regional Bureaux and field operations has been strengthened and is being monitored.

There was a need to ensure competent and diverse security workforce

21.   As per the Action Plan, the effectiveness of advice and support is only as good as the quality of FSAs who deliver them. FSAs, deployed in the most security risk-affected locations, are key in ensuring staff safety, and are the principal proponents for strengthening the culture of security. It is crucial therefore that security staff are technically proficient to meet UNHCR's security needs. In line with the Recruitment and Assignments Policy, UNHCR is also committed to achieving and maintaining gender parity at all grades and to have a workforce that is diverse, inclusive and representative of all regions. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of security staff at UNHCR recorded an increasing trend mainly due to higher security risks.

**Figure 1 - Number of UNHCR security staff in 2017, 2018 and 2019**
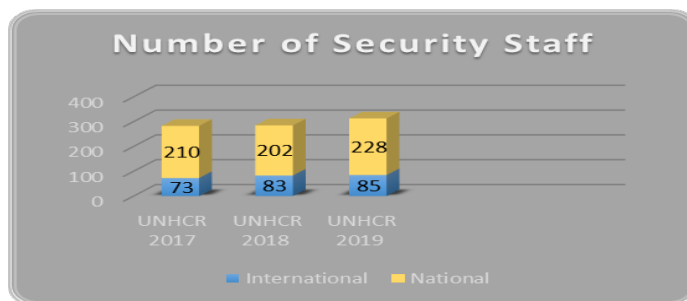
22.   FSS provided advice to Bureaux and country operations regarding the number and level of security staff needed. For instance, FSS had advised, taking into consideration the experience and skills required to perform assigned functions, that: (a) Regional FSA posts should be at the P-5 level and co-located within

the Bureaux; (b) FSAs located in capital cities should be at the P-4 level; and (c) countries designated as high risk should consider having officers at the P-5 level. However, 2 of the 7 Regional Bureaux had FSAs at the P-4 level that were not co-located within the Bureau, FSAs located in capital cities were not always at the P-4 level, and currently no UNHCR country operations had security officers at the P-5 level, unlike comparable United Nations agencies which have created P-5 positions for their highest risk operations. Moreover, due to decentralization/regionalization, Regional Bureau Directors have the authority, subject to conditions, to create P-1 to P-4 positions in country operations. Given this revised delegation of authority, which entrusted human resources management to Regional Bureaux, the involvement of DESS/FSS in the security workforce was curtailed, increasing the risk that security positions and expertise necessary may not be given the required level of priority.

23.   In UNHCR the percentage of female security staff was low, at 6 per cent in 2017 and 2018, increasing to 7 per cent in 2019. In the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), the percentage of females was 22 for the same period. While FSS aimed to significantly increase the number of women, further initiatives were still needed to improve female representation. Regarding regional representation of international FSAs, as at 31 December 2019, all regions were represented as illustrated in figure 2. The FSS' benchmark was to achieve a more diverse workforce, and it had been successful, in part, and in recruiting more French and Arabic speakers in view of language requirements being included in advertised posts.

Figure 2: Regional representation of international FSAs
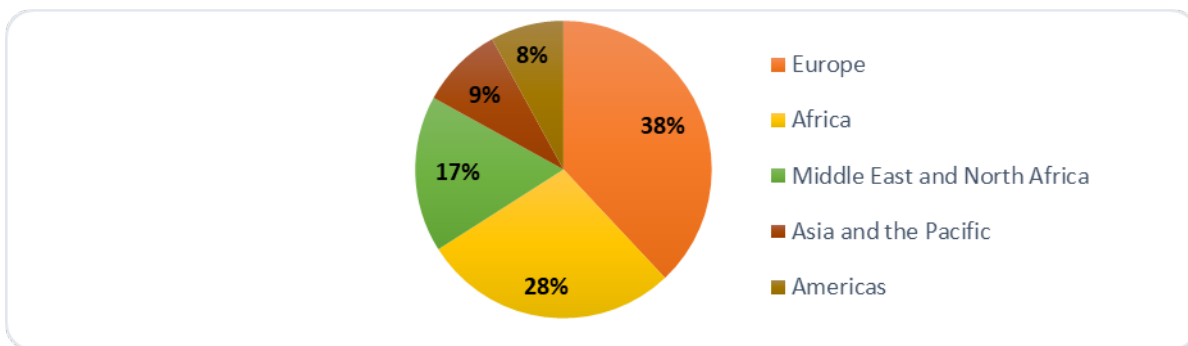
24.   In developing job descriptions for recruiting FSAs, FSS faced some challenges. For instance, while the Division of Human Resources (DHR) provided flexibility in determining educational requirements for FSAs by accepting military and police academy diplomas as equivalent to a bachelor's degree, other experienced security applicants were rejected due to insufficient educational qualifications. In 2019, the efforts by FSS to identify women at an entry level with potential to succeed as an FSA were unsuccessful when DHR determined that they did not have sufficient years of experience to meet the UNHCR grading standards.

25.   Moreover, as per the Action Plan, FSS aimed to "retain the best FSAs". However, UNHCR faced problems in retaining FSAs in field locations. For instance, in the three-year period from 2017 to 2019, while FSS recruited 21 international FSAs, 6 left during the same period. Moreover, decisions made by Regional Bureaux and managers/post owners to downgrade FSA posts meant that certain positions in some locations were no longer attractive as they were considered under-graded compared to similar positions in other United Nations agencies. Staff turnover and inability to retain FSAs therefore increased risk of adversely impacting the delivery of safety and security in the field. In OIOS view, there was a need to address these issues at an organizational level to attract and retain security officers and ensure a diverse workforce.

> **(3)** **The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should: (a) clarify, in coordination with the Division of Human Resources, the accountability and authority of those involved in hiring security staff; (b) task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to implement guidance and criteria on numbers and levels of field office security staff; and (c) ensure that Regional Bureaux consult with the Field Security Service regarding any change to Field Security Adviser posts.**
>
> *UNHCR accepted recommendation 3 and stated that: (a) DESS had undertaken meetings with DHR, and had improved processes including an updated joint dashboard review of the security function and review and all current job descriptions for security professionals; (b) DESS had drafted guidelines, to be shared with DHR and Regional Bureaux in September 2020, for evaluating the need for international security staffing, grading of FSAs, certifying FSAs, filling short-term FSA gaps, and FSA configurations in country; and (c) the requirement for Regional Bureaux to inform and consult with FSS in case of creation, discontinuation, upgrade or downgrade of FSA posts was included in the update of the 2012 Policy.* Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence of: actions taken to clarify the authority and accountability of those involved in hiring security staff; implementation of guidance on the number and grade of security staff; and consultation with FSS in the creation, discontinuation, upgrade or downgrade of FSA posts.

Satisfactory arrangements were in place on security liaison and partnerships

26.   To improve overall security management at the inter-agency level and in line with the 2012 Policy, UNHCR implemented liaison and partnership arrangements with UNDSS and other UNSMS members. FSS represented UNHCR in IASMN and the associated working groups of UNSMS. In IASMN, FSS was a member of the Saving Lives Together Oversight Committee to support partners and Non-Governmental Organization personnel and was a member of the Programme Criticality Coordination Team. OIOS assessed that these arrangements on liaison and partnerships were adequate and in line with the 2012 Policy.

Mandatory security training and security certification programmes needed to be completed

27.   Completion of training on security matters is imperative to ensure that UNHCR staff and its security staff have the necessary awareness and skills to mitigate associated risks. FSS worked closely with the Global Learning and Development Centre of UNHCR (GLDC) to determine and approve the content of global security learning programmes. In 2017-2019, there were 32 different security trainings available, either provided by UNDSS or UNHCR. UNHCR had also developed a dedicated SMLP for field managers, which was emulated by other United Nations agencies.

28.   The audit noted some gaps in UNHCR's mandatory and recommended staff training as well as the certifications for security advisers (see table 1). The available data on completion rates was inaccurate, as all sources of information were not captured in the GLDC/FSS compliance records, including copies of the 'BSAFE' certificates provided to OIOS and certificates staff obtained from UNHCR's Learn and Connect platform. There were also delays in providing the compliance rate for Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training globally. As of end of March 2020, FSS could not provide the 2019 completion rate. GLDC and FSS commented that they faced challenges in collating 'BSAFE' and SSAFE statistics from UNHCR and UNDSS. As a result, UNHCR was not able to properly monitor compliance with mandatory security and other training to ensure staff were aware of the security risks they may face and to measure whether the security culture in UNHCR was improving.

Table 1
Compliance rates for security training

| | *In percentage* | | |
| | *2017* | *2018* | *2019* |
Training			
Basic Security in the Field/Advanced Security in the Field (2017), BSAFE (2018/19)	84 and 76	82	82
SSAFE	80	64	*
SMT	73	86	42
SMLP	44	54	72
FSA Workshop	50	63	53
Security Certification Programme	n/a	n/a	91
Electronic Security Analysis Process and Practice	n/a	n/a	36

* – data not available
n/a – not applicable

> **(4) The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, in conjunction with the Division of Human Resources and Regional Bureaux, should strengthen monitoring of security training by: (a) taking steps to ensure full compliance by staff with mandatory security training and security certification programmes for international Field Security Advisers; and (b) ensuring accuracy and timeliness of training records.**
>
> *UNHCR accepted recommendation 4 and stated that: (a) data on training compliance was shared with managers with expectation for action of full compliance by all staff prior to the next update in September 2020; and (b) DESS and GLDC would incorporate additional checks in ensuring accuracy and timeliness of data including exploring technical solutions to improve data sharing with UNDSS. UNHCR had formally raised the problem of data-sharing with UNDSS in the June IASMN meeting.* Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence of: (a) full compliance by staff with mandatory security training and security certification programmes for international FSAs; and (b) the maintenance of accurate and timely training records.

C.   Security governance and oversight

<u>There was a need to prioritize and provide adequate oversight of safety and security</u>

29.   UNHCR senior management are responsible for ensuring they have access to complete, accurate and timely security information to enable sound decision making and to ensure appropriate security strategies, directions and instructions are developed and issued. In addition to established roles and responsibilities of the key actors in the security management structure outlined in the 2012 Policy, security related responsibilities are also discussed during the meetings of the SMC and Senior Executive Team (SET), and also the UNHCR Security Steering Committee (SSC). OIOS noted the following:

- Safety and security matters were presented at SMC once a year from 2017 to 2019, although the Action Plan required two security related presentations yearly. Also, limited time was usually allocated by SMC to the annual FSS presentation, and OIOS noted that the presentations lacked important information such as outcome of security incidents. FSS advised that the SMC meeting was generally for sharing information and not a forum to deliberate and act on or monitor actions to be taken by security management.

- There was no presentation on safety and security matters to the SET from 2017 to 2019.

- Per the Action Plan, it was expected that there would be at least four SSC meetings per year on targeted high-risk operations. However, only 2 of the 4 meetings took place in 2017 (Afghanistan and Iraq); two in 2018 (Libya and Somalia) and no meetings were held in 2019. OIOS noted that SSC had been providing strategic, senior management oversight of operations and activities affecting the lives of persons of concern, but its coverage was limited only to high risk environments and their meetings were convened on an ad hoc basis. There was also no follow-up on action points made during the four SSC meetings held. Since SSC focused only on security issues in high risk operations, UNHCR had not given due consideration to organization-wide strategic security management.

30. In the absence of a specific body in UNHCR mandated to oversee and govern safety and security matters, there was a risk that such issues lacked visibility and insufficient attention by senior leadership. In OIOS view, there is a need to expand the mandate of SSC to cover security issues globally for adequate and effective oversight across UNHCR.

(5)	**The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply should amend the terms of reference of the Security Steering Committee, for endorsement by the Senior Executive Team, to cover organization-wide security strategic management issues and increase the frequency of meetings and content of reporting to senior management for better visibility and strategic direction.**
	UNHCR accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Terms of Reference of SSC were amended to reflect organization-wide strategic security management. AHC-O and DESS had agreed an enhanced schedule of security oversight by SET. This would include a calendar of country operations prioritized for review by SSC due to level of risk and/or specific concerns for UNHCR and at least two annual SMC presentations and presentations to other appropriate fora (e.g., SET, SET-plus), to update on security changes in the operating environment and other security policy and management issues. UNHCR held five SSC meetings on Burkina Faso, Niger, Sudan, Venezuela and Yemen in 2020; and one security briefing for SMC. Based on the evidence provided by UNHCR, recommendation 5 has been closed.

IV.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

31. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNHCR 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 security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[3]/ Important[4]	C/ O[5]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[6]
1	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to reinforce the security culture in UNHCR by: (a) updating the existing UNHCR Security Management Policy; (b) enhancing internal messaging highlighting the responsibility of managers to lead by example in safety and security matters; and (c) improving compliance with security policies and measures.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence of: (i) the issuance of the revised policy and requisite internal messaging; (ii) increase in the number of senior managers and staff compliant with required training; and (iii) overall improved compliance levels with security policies and measures.	31 October 2020
2	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations with support from the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply and in cooordination with Regional Bureaux should define the Field Security Service's responsibilities in the decentralized and regionalized context including in terms of supporting the security oversight function with the necessary tools and authorities to minimize gaps in the provision of advice and support, and the monitoring of its effectiveness.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence that: (a) gaps have been addressed in the provision of safety and security advice with clearly defined FSS accountabilities in a regionalized context, including the necessary tools and authorities; and (b) the provision of effective advice and support to Regional Bureaux and field operations has been strengthened and is being monitored.	30 September 2020
3	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should: (a) clarify, in coordination with the Division of Human Resources, the accountability and authority of those involved in hiring security staff; (b) task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to implement guidance and criteria on numbers and levels of field offices security staff; and	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence of: actions taken to clarify the authority and accountability of those involved in hiring security staff; implementation of guidance on the number and grade of security staff; and consultation with FSS in the creation, discontinuation, upgrade or downgrade of FSA posts.	30 September 2020

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[3] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

[4] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

[5] Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

[6] Date provided by UNHCR in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

	(c) ensure that Regional Bureaux consult with the Field Security Service regarding any change to Field Security Adviser posts.				
4	The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, in conjunction with the Division of Human Resources and Regional Bureaux, should strengthen monitoring of security training by: (a) taking steps to ensure full compliance by staff with mandatory security training and security certification programmes for international Field Security Advisers; and (b) ensuring accuracy and timeliness of training records.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence of: (a) full compliance by staff with mandatory security training and security certification programmes for international FSAs; and (b) accurate and timely training records.	31 October 2020
5	The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply should amend the terms of reference of the Security Steering Committee, for endorsement by the Senior Executive Team, to cover organization-wide security strategic management issues and increase the frequency of meetings and content of reporting to senior management for better visibility and strategic direction.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of security strategic management and governance at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[7]/ Important[8]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to reinforce the security culture in UNHCR by: (a) updating the existing UNHCR Security Management Policy; (b) enhancing internal messaging highlighting the responsibility of managers to lead by example in safety and security matters; and (c) improving compliance with security policies and measures.	Important	Yes	AHC-O	31 October, 2020	UNHCR accepts this recommendation. For a front-line humanitarian organization working in insecure environments, reinforcing a culture of security requires long-term efforts backed by sustained managerial commitment to ensure safety and security is ingrained in operating practices. Concerning (a), updating the existing UNHCR Security Management Policy; the updated draft is presently complete and with senior management for final review. We envision release in October. Regarding (b) enhancing internal messaging on security, this has substantially increased, and will continue. For example, following the release of results of the last review of compliance with Security Risk Management Measures with relevant managers, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations has followed this with a clear personal message to each Bureau Director,

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[7] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.
[8] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[7]/ Important[8]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						conveying the importance of ensuring compliance and expectation for corrective measures to be taken prior to the next interim update, scheduled for September 2020. DESS is further reviewing ways to strengthen security awareness and culture through enhanced internal messaging; this will be part of the rollout of the revised Security Management Policy. Finally on (c) improving compliance, results of the last review of compliance with Security Risk Management Measures have been shared with managers, with clear expectation set for prompt follow-up action. In this process, DESS has made substantive changes incorporating recommendations made by OIOS to reduce subjectivity and provide more data on deficiencies requiring attention. Results of follow-up actions will be reviewed, and overall compliance reassessed, in September.
2	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations with support from the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply and in cooordination with Regional Bureaux should define the Field Security Service's responsibilities in the decentralized and regionalized context including in terms of supporting the security oversight function with the necessary tools and authorities to minimize gaps in the	Important	Yes	AHC-O	30 September, 2020	UNHCR Accepts this recommendation. DESS has begun a comprehensive review of processes and procedures where responsibilities have changed under Regionalization. These are being clarified in the form of standard operating procedures, developed in cooperation with the senior security personnel of the Bureaux, which will then be shared

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	provision of advice and support, and the monitoring of its effectiveness.					for review and endorsement of relevant Bureaux and HQ managers. In addition, DESS is working to define standard procedures for fulfilling its monitoring and oversight functions in the Regionalized structure, including a structured processes for both desktop review from HQ, and on-site monitoring and support missions. Again, these are being developed in concert with Bureaux staff, and will be submitted for endorsement of the different managers. DESS aims to have these actions completed by end of September, 2020.
3	The UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations should: (a) clarify, in coordination with the Division of Human Resources, the accountability and authority of those involved in hiring security staff; (b) task the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply to implement guidance and criteria on numbers and levels of field offices security staff; and (c) ensure that Regional Bureaux consult with the Field Security Service regarding any change to Field Security Adviser posts.	Important	Yes	AHC-O	30 September, 2020	UNHCR accepts this recommendation. Since the conclusion of the audit DESS has undertaken a succession of meetings with DHR, and identified a number of steps to clarify and improve processes. These began with an updated joint dashboard review of the security function in UNHCR; and review and update of all current job descriptions for security professionals to ensure these accurately reflect workforce needs and filter in the right candidates. Regarding (b), DESS has drafted concrete guidelines for evaluating the need for international security staffing, grading of FSAs, certifying FSAs, filling short-term FSA gaps,

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						and FSA configurations in country. These guidelines will be shared with DHR, as well as with each regional Bureaux, to ensure common approaches by the end of September 2020.

(c) The requirement for Regional Bureaux to inform and consult with FSS in case of creation, discontinuation, upgrade or downgrade of Field Security Adviser posts has been included in the update of the Security Management Policy. As part of the process, the Post Classification Unit, which reviews such submissions, will notify FSS in case of any relevant changes.

Regarding gender balance in the professional security workforce, FSS has set the goal of ensuring at least 50% of new FSAs recruited are women until parity is achieved in the workforce. In 2020 to date there have been five FSA recruitments, of which three are women; and a further recruitment of a female is in the pipeline. This is in part due to procedures modified and adapted to facilitate the need to address gender balance of the workforce. |
| 4 | The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, in conjunction with the Division of Human Resources and Regional Bureaux, should strengthen monitoring of security training by: (a) taking steps to | Important | Yes | Director, DESS | 31 October, 2020 | UNHCR accepts this recommendation. Regarding (a) supporting full compliance, UNHCR has shared data on training compliance with managers, and |

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	ensure full compliance by staff with mandatory security training and security certification programmes for international Field Security Advisers; and (b) ensuring accuracy and timeliness of training records.					through various channels reinforced the expectation for corrective action to be taken prior to the next interim update scheduled for September 2020. As for (b) accuracy and timeliness of data, DESS and GLDC will incorporate additional checks in the current review process to reconcile discrepant data before further reporting. UNHCR has formally raised the problem of data-sharing with UNDSS in the June IASMN; and GLDC is further exploring technical solutions to improve data sharing with UNDSS.
5	The UNHCR Division of Emergency, Security and Supply should amend the terms of reference of the Security Steering Committee, for endorsement by the Senior Executive Team, to cover organization-wide security strategic management issues and increase the frequency of meetings and content of reporting to senior management for better visibility and strategic direction.	Important	Yes	Director, DESS	Action Completed	UNHCR accepts this recommendation. DESS has amended the Terms of Reference TORs of the Security Steering Committee to more comprehensively reflect organization-wide strategic security management, and these have been endorsed by the SET. This action is therefore complete. AHC-O and DESS have further agreed upon a significantly enhanced schedule of security oversight by the SET. This will include a calendar of country operations, established annually and updated as required, prioritized for review by the SSC due to level of risk and/or specific concerns for UNHCR. It will also include at least two annual SMC

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						presentations and presentations to other appropriate fora (e.g., SET, SET-plus), to update on security changes in the operating environment and other security policy and management issues. Since the conclusion of the field work of this audit, UNHCR has held five Security Steering Committee meetings, on Sudan, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Venezuela and Niger; and one security briefing for the SMC. Eight further SSC meetings are scheduled for country operations prioritized jointly by the Bureaux, DESS and the SET. A further discussion on security is planned for a senior management meeting scheduled for December, pending permissibility of travel conditions at that time.