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**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE BOMBING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICES
IN ALGIERS, ALGERIA
11 DECEMBER 2007**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. On Tuesday, 11 December 2007, two explosive-laden vehicles were detonated in Algiers. The first vehicle targeted the Constitutional Court. The second specifically targeted the UN Office in a residential neighborhood of Algiers, killing 17 UN system staff members and injuring 40.
- ii. The first part of this report provides a preliminary assessment by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) of the devastating terrorist attack on UN offices in Algiers, a preliminary evaluation of how the UN security management system responded to this emergency, and the resulting lessons-learned. The second part of the report addresses what is being done to protect the remaining UN system staff in Algiers and in other duty stations where staff could be at increased risk.
- iii. The views reflected in the report are those of the UN Department of Safety and Security except where indicated, the views of UNDSS' partners in the UN security management system are reflected. Information has been gathered on the basis of material immediately available following the bombing, but it must be stressed that the facts about this tragic event are still emerging and until such time as the Algerian authorities have provided the Organization with an account of the investigation of the incident, this assessment cannot be considered as full and final. Furthermore, in analyzing the events of 11 December, care has been taken not to apportion blame or responsibility to any single individual or group in this report.
- iv. A more thorough effort to investigate the incident is recommended. UNDSS will work diligently to enable any additional investigation and will retain all documentation relevant to the event, to include the recovered and preserved electronic files of the Security Advisor in Algiers, Mr. Babacar Ndiaye, who tragically lost his life as a result of the attack.
- v. In setting out the events of 11 December, the report provides background on the UN presence in Algeria and at the same time, points to the critical existence of terrorist threats against the UN in Algeria and the operational capabilities of the perpetrators. This is fundamental to understanding the context in which this event occurred. This is followed by a detailed account of how the UN security management system operated in the country, including its relations with host country authorities. In examining the latter, shortcomings such as difficulties in information sharing between the Algerian authorities and the UN are cited which will require additional examination.
- vi. The report goes on to address how the UN security management system responded to this attack by activating its crisis coordination centre, redeploying existing officers from other duty stations to Algeria (as no SURGE capacity) to mitigate the risks to staff remaining in the country and by acting swiftly to deal with the crisis, and to provide immediate support, including the necessary psycho-social support to the

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families and staff at large. It is revealed that some of these activities were hampered by a distinct lack of current information such as up-to-date staff lists at the agency level which caused significant delays in identifying the dead and missing.

- vii. The second part of the report addresses what is being done to protect the remaining UN system staff in Algiers and in other duty stations where staff could be at increased risk. Given that terrorist threats to the UN, not only in Algeria but worldwide, have dramatically increased after the 11 December 2007 attack on UN offices, UNDSS has had to adapt its approach to addressing this critical and dramatically altered threat. In Algeria alone, an analysis of post-crisis actions reveals that the Algerian government was very concerned about UN intentions to continue operations, leading to a review of UN security measures that were conducted in close consultation with the Government of Algeria without compromising UN security standards. However, much remains to be done and all accommodation currently being used is provisional and will require strengthening.
- viii. It is clear from the report that the UN has become a major and priority target of international terrorism making it subject to elevated security risks at all of its operations worldwide. Although UNDSS has made progress in addressing past security shortcomings despite being under-resourced, it now faces acute security challenges posed by the determined forces of terrorism for which not only are sufficient resources required, but also an elevated level of cooperation and coordination between the UN and Host Country authorities on security issues.
- ix. The current challenges confronting the UN tests the balance between programme objectives and security considerations and has brought into sharp focus the fact that the cost of doing business in a secure and safe environment is high.
- x. Accordingly, the report draws a number of conclusions that include:
 - The need to review rationalization of the threat-risk equation.
 - The need for the UN to accept that security is part and parcel of the development, peacekeeping and relief dynamic and cannot be discounted.
 - Advocacy of the UN's neutrality is vital.
 - Compounds and make-shift infrastructures that too frequently today mark the UN's global footprint cannot withstand attacks of the magnitude witnessed in Algiers. As such, issues of stand-off and other mitigating measures need to be addressed, including the establishment of communication channels between UN Country Teams and national authorities to substantially address and discuss security concerns and mutually coordinate the required response.
 - UN Country and Security Management Teams need to be provided with security risk management training in a timely fashion in order to gain a better understanding of the

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threat environment and to be able to address the vagaries of different and difficult security issues and to offset the seemingly varied perceptions of threats and appreciate required mitigating measures.

- DSS needs to strengthen its support to Designated Officials and Security Management teams by providing security guidance and advice.
 - The UN's crisis response capacity, in terms of sufficient personnel and equipment, particularly for mass casualty events, needs to be resourced adequately to compensate for the lack of dedicated crisis management personnel and limited facilities and equipment.
 - Host Governments need to honour their responsibilities for the safety, security and well-being of staff in their countries and address critical security requirements. Although interim security measures are in the process of being finalized in Algiers, the lack of stand-off perimeter and other mitigating measures for UN offices remain an issue. Negotiations with the Government of Algeria to identify suitable and safe accommodations must progress.
 - A review of our vulnerabilities and security measures (including but not limited to information sharing, shatter-resistant film, structural assessments, the establishment of liaison structures) for at least 20 other UN duty stations flagged as high risk must be expedited on an urgent basis.
 - Consideration of this new threat should be taken into account when planning for meetings, conferences and missions.
- xi. UNDSS would like to make special mention of the valiant efforts of its colleagues, the UN Country Team and the national staff who all played a vital and major role in the response effort. The response to the attack was an extraordinary time of solidarity among the UN family.

II. The Event

1. Based on information available at this time (and pending receipt of the report of investigation from the Algerian authorities), separated only by a few minutes, at approximately 0920 and 0940 (Algeria time) on Tuesday, 11 December 2007, two explosive-laden vehicles were detonated in Algiers. The first vehicle targeted the Constitutional Court. The second specifically targeted the UN Office in a residential neighborhood of Algiers. In addition to UNDP, the building housed WFP, ILO, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNAIDS and DSS. The blast also significantly damaged the UNHCR office located approximately 50 meters across the street. The (FAO, WHO, UNICEF and World Bank offices) located at some distance from the UN Office, were not damaged by the blast. A total of 17 United Nations system staff were killed in this attack and 40 staff were injured (see attached Annex for list of names and agency affiliations). Numerous Algerian nationals also lost their lives or were injured in the attack.

2. A few hours later, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the bombings, stating that a truck filled with 800 kilograms of explosives was used "to attack ... the den of international apostasy, the HQ of the UN in Algeria which is located in the green area ... ~~ignoring~~ the many security mitigating measures." Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the former Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC—*Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat*) had pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden in September 2006, accepting not only the ideology of global jihad but also adopting Al Qaeda's list of priority targets, including the United Nations.

III. Background of the UN Presence in Algeria

3. Algeria's turbulent history had its first impact on the United Nations beginning in March 1992, when Algeria was swept by indiscriminate violence including both car bombs and suicide attacks, carried out by armed opposition groups. When, in October 1993, these groups began to issue warnings to the expatriate community to leave Algeria, UN dependents were given the option of leaving the country and returning to their recognized places of home leave. Subsequently, Phase IV of the security plan was declared on 26 March 1994 and the core group of remaining UN system staff moved to live and work in the El Djazair Hotel in Algiers.

4. In September 1996, a security assessment mission to Algeria determined that any desire by the UN system to increase activities in Algeria would need to be accompanied by strengthened security arrangements including the provision by the government of an armed security detail on a full-time basis and the authorization to operate a security communication system. When the Algerian Government (GoA) agreed to these recommendations, the Security Phase was lowered to level III in October 1996. Otherwise, little had changed in the security situation or in the UN presence until September 2004 when another security assessment mission determined that, as a consequence of the stringent security measures put in place by the host government, the security situation had gradually improved. The Algerian authorities meanwhile expressed strong disapproval of the fact that Phase III was still in effect since it was seen as an "unfair treatment which gave the country an undeserved bad image abroad to the extent that it

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kept out foreign investment.” As a result of the recommendations in the report, the Secretary-General approved the downgrading of the security phase from level III to II, in Algiers.

5. In April 2006, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria wrote to the Secretary-General, expressing severe displeasure that Phase I had been declared for only the *Wilaya* (Department) of Algiers the previous month and that other *Wilayas* where the security situation had also improved remained at their current levels. In May 2006, at the request of the Secretary-General, an inter-agency security assessment mission traveled to Algeria to re-evaluate the security phases. The mission found that the security situation in the country had “substantially improved” and that the “government security forces were more than capable and willing to provide security for UN staff and operations.” Consequently, the recommendation was made for a reduction from Phase II to Phase I of the Security Plan for several other *Wilayas*, in addition to Algiers, which was already at Phase I. This recommendation was approved by the Secretary-General on 11 August 2006 and remained in effect up to and until the bombing on 11 December 2007. It should be noted that this assessment was made before the GSPC was aligned with Al Qaeda (see Section B below).

IV. Implementation of the Security Management System at the Duty Station

A. Host Country Implementation of its Charter Requirements and Security Arrangements

6. The primary responsibility for the security and protection of staff members, their spouses and eligible dependents and property and of the organization rests with the Host Government. This responsibility flows from every government’s normal and inherent function of maintaining law and order and protecting persons and property within its jurisdiction. In the case of international organizations and their officials and property, the government is considered to have a special responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations or the government’s agreements with individual organizations.

7. The only avenue available to the Designated Official for contact with the Government of Algeria on security issues was provided through the Director General for Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and no access was provided to security authorities, thus not enabling the UN to seeking information regarding threats. Accordingly, all communications were directed through the Director General of Protocol and this procedure applied not only to the United Nations but also to all diplomatic missions, except for a small number of large embassies.

8. Immediately after the 11 April 2007 terrorist attack in Algiers directed against the Presidential Palace, the DO called for an SMT meeting the same day. As reflected in the SMT minutes of 11 April, during this meeting, it was agreed to address the Government of Algeria on security issues. According to the DO, consequently, a note verbale was sent by the UN Algiers office to the Director General of Protocol requesting a meeting to discuss further improvement of the security for the UN. It has been reported that no response to this note was received. Nevertheless, the DO had contacted the Director General of Protocol to discuss the security issue and in response, the Director General indicated that appropriate security would be provided to the UN house in view of the 11 April terrorist attack, but did not discuss technical details. The

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above exchange demonstrates the difficulties of addressing security issues with the host country. Upon the DO's insistence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed that the DO could meet with the Mayor of Hydra municipality to discuss technical security matters. It is important to underline that, as per usual practice, the Mayor would not have accepted such a meeting without prior approval and support by the Director of Protocol. At the end of April 2007, the DO met with the Mayor of Hydra and during this meeting, the DO requested that specific traffic restrictions be implemented in the vicinity of the UN house, specifically, making a one way street if full traffic restrictions were not possible, installing speed bumps on the road, and placing concrete barriers in front of the UN house. A follow-up letter was sent from the DO to the Mayor reiterating the above requests and the DO continued to follow-up in every way possible. The aforementioned actions resulted in the positioning of police check-points in front of the UN house and at the outer edge of the street, together with an increased number of police officers posted next to the UN house. However, concrete barriers were not installed and only limited traffic restrictions were introduced.

9. Owing to the lack of the requested response from the Algerian authorities, it was proposed to proactively seek a new location for UN premises through commercial entities, which would meet security requirements and ensure a stand-off distance. The 29 April SMT meeting endorsed this approach. A task force was constituted under the direction supervision of the DO and headed by the UNDP Operations Manager with the support of the assistant to the SA and the UNDP procurement assistant. In spite of the extensive search, only one location which met the necessary requirements, including stand-off distance and secured access was found - the Algiers Business Center (ABC). A detailed assessment of this building was made and transmitted to Headquarters on 16 May 2007. It was reported that no response was received from UNDSS. However, UNDSS had extensive verbal consultations with the Security Advisor on this issue. Bearing in mind the presence of the high-profile foreign commercial companies in this building that had already been targeted by terrorists in Algeria, it was deemed that this location was not considered ideal and the search for a new location continued without success due to the limitations of the real-estate market in Algiers and the fact that sufficient stand-off distance is difficult to achieve in the city.

10. On 29 December 2007, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb released the statement claiming that despite the fact that the Algerian authorities knew the intentions of AQIM to attack the UN Headquarters once they had seized the surveillance video found on the cell phone of one of its members, Sufyan Abu Haydara arrested after the April 2007 attack in Algiers, the Mujahideen were still able to penetrate the area and execute the attack causing substantial damage. In his public comments, the Algerian Minister of the Interior, Mr. Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni, also mentioned that the security services knew about plans to attack the UN. The issue as to what information on specific threats was available prior to the attack needs to be further evaluated.

B. The Security Risk Assessment

11. The Algerian government was able to hold relatively peaceful local elections in November 2007. In the run-up to and during the elections, there was an intense period of heightened security. Following the success of the elections and the security measures imposed to assure the security of those elections, the Minister of Interior, acknowledged that the intense

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level of security measures was relaxed during the post-election period to allow the security forces to take some rest. Whether or not this action might have contributed to the terrorists being able to gain access to the street of the UNDP building without being blocked by a police checkpoint on 11 December, is a matter for further review by the Government of Algeria.

12. In what could be perceived as an over-reliance on the use of preventive screening measures, the security posture of Algiers does not present the image of a city under siege. Major roads and avenues, including those close to official buildings, are not blocked by concrete or other types of security barriers, but rather protection is provided through police checkpoints using spike strips - while relatively efficient against cars, these are certainly not effective enough to block an attack by suicide truck bombs or even cars traveling at high speed.

13. Furthermore, the delay from the Algerian authorities in responding to the insistence of the United Nations that comprehensive defensive measures be set-up immediately to protect the UNICEF building following the 11 December attack, has to be viewed as another illustration of the Government of Algeria's different approach to security which is at variance with UN procedures.

14. The threat of terrorist attacks against the UN at any given location is a combination of several factors including hostile intent by perpetrators against the UN, their operational capabilities, and a significant indication of the hostile intent and capability of the perpetrators (a prerequisite to understanding the threat). The security risks associated with the terrorist threats are determined by assessing the potential impact of anticipated attacks on the UN and the assessed likelihood of such attacks.

15. The hostile intent against the UN in Algeria was present and well-known before the attack. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in pledging allegiance to Al Qaeda, adopted not only its ideology, strategy, tactics, techniques and procedures, but also its targeting priorities. Leaders and strategists of Al Qaeda have consistently developed and promulgated anti-UN propaganda within the ideology of Global Jihad and placed the United Nations as a priority target.

16. ~~The operational capabilities of AQIM in Algeria have been demonstrated in a number of deadly terrorist attacks executed by GSPC prior to September 2006 and later by AQIM, not only in Algeria but also in neighboring countries. Since the transition of GSPC to AQIM, there have been multiple terrorist attacks executed in Algeria using Al Qaeda's methods against government and international targets, including attacks on police stations, foreign workers, and Algerian Government entities. Many of these attacks were allegedly carried out by vehicle-borne explosive devices. However, in April 2007, a new trend in attacks commenced using suicide bombers.~~

17. A probable indicator of the hostile intent against the UN and the capabilities of the perpetrators first surfaced when AQIM attacked foreign workers in the country in December 2006. It was further reinforced when AQIM claimed an Interpol regional office was among the intended targets of the February 2007 terrorist attacks in Algiers. In May 2007, the media branch of AQIM issued a direct threat against the UN. That threat, taken in combination with

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AQIM operational capabilities, was a serious warning to the UN. The gravity of these threats, as well as a warning to the Security Advisor that UN staff, operations and facilities should be considered as probable targets of terrorist attacks, was issued by the DSS Threat and Risk Assessment Unit on 21 December 2006 and 15 May 2007.

18. The Security Risk Assessment (SRA), developed by the Security Advisor and approved by the DO and SMT, requires further review and fact finding. The SRA assessed the security risks from terrorist threats as "high". The potential impact was assessed as "severe" and the probability of attack was assessed as "likely." In the updated SRA of October 2007, following the on-going terrorist attacks in Algeria, the corresponding security risks were assessed as "critical," the likelihood as "very likely", with the anticipated impact rated as "critical." The Security Advisor had also accurately identified, on the basis of terrorist tactical trends, a worst-case scenario of anticipated attacks by clearly describing the use of trucks loaded with explosives by suicide bombers. The impact and likelihood of anticipated attacks was determined by the Security Advisor (SA) on the basis of a vulnerability assessment that identified the weaknesses and strengths of the deployed mitigating measures. The concentration of UN offices in one area, the absence of stand-off perimeters, the lack of parking space, communications deficiencies, and an absence of formal contacts with national law enforcement authorities were identified in the SRA as weaknesses in the existing mitigating measures. Police patrols in the vicinity of the UN offices were identified among other recommended mitigating measures in the SRA.

19. However, there are different interpretations of security risks as outlined in the SRAs. According to the DO, there was no indication that a car-bomb attack referred to in the SRA constituted a direct threat against the UN. Rather it meant to reflect possible attacks on the Government institutions in the city of Algiers and consequent collateral risks to the UN - there was no evidence that AQIM was directly targeting the UN. To reinforce this view, the DO notes that the threat associated with an earthquake was also characterized in the same manner and rated as very likely and critical, similar to how terrorist threats were addressed.

20. According to the DO, the SRA does not indicate the terrorist threats constituted a direct threat against the UN. His statement is supported by the UN risk management strategy for Algeria which was more aligned with a much less critical threat. The SRA was shared with DSS Headquarters and no written comments were received back from Headquarters. However, UNDSS West Africa Desk confirms that it did conduct extensive discussions regarding the SRA with the Security Advisor and was of the same opinion as the DO, i.e., that based on their assessment the UN was not under an imminent threat of attack at that time. Through the mandatory flow of information and requisite reports, UNDSS confirms that reporting requirements from the field, as dictated by existing procedure was followed. This constituted the receipt of SMT minutes, quarterly incident reports and daily press clippings, thus ensuring that UNDSS was fully aware of the security situation in Algeria at that time and the security arrangements made by the SMT.

C. Actions of the UN Security Management System (UNSMS)

21. In his report to DSS dated 17 April 2007, the Security Advisor reported that the security situation was undergoing a serious deterioration with regular attacks targeting foreigners, including Algiers. The Security Advisor specifically cited the official link between Al Qaeda and the GSPC as a significant problem. He reported at security management team (SMT) meetings that he had regularly provided briefings of the situation including the recommendation that Phase II be declared for Algiers. The SMT, at its meeting in April 2007, decided to maintain Security Phase I with a few modifications such as a formal request to the authorities to reinforce a police presence at UN buildings, radio tracking and monitoring of staff movement, a limitation on staff movement, imposition of a curfew, and a suspension of missions. The Designated Official had also asked the Security Advisor to provide additional Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) and Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards (MORSS) recommendations. At its 29 April meeting, the SMT, faced with the lack of an adequate response from the Algerian authorities to its requests (including restricted access to the road, installation of concrete blocks and speed bumps), formally instituted a search for a new fully MOSS compliant building in the private sector. This search was immediately started and a first proposal was sent to headquarters on 16 May.

22. In his report to DSS dated 1 August 2007, the Security Advisor stated that the security situation in the country had deeply changed from the turning point of 11 September 2006, with more attacks against foreigners, and in Algiers, more use of car bombs, more attacks against military and police facilities, all of which were well planned and organized (simultaneous attacks) and which were even taped and aired through Internet websites.

23. In September 2007 (as per a letter to DSS HQ dated 9 September 2007), the Security Advisor recommended that the security phase be upgraded to Phase II in all areas where there were major incidents or large scale military operations. However, there is no evidence this issue was addressed to and discussed by the DO and SMT.

24. Algiers was in Security Phase I at the time of the attack on 11 December. This phase had been in place since 20 March 2006 when the Designated Official, in consultation with the Security Management Team, had decided to lower the phase from Phase II (which had been in effect since 4 October 2004) to Phase I, based on the improved security situation in the city of Algiers. This change of phase was endorsed by the inter-agency security mission of May 2006. Whilst Phase I was in effect for Algiers, the security risk management strategy introduced by the SMT, in reality, corresponded more to the measures relevant to Security Phase II, including a curfew, movement restrictions and operational radio 100MHz.

25. In 2006 the Government of Algeria complained about a Phase I classification for the *Wilaya* of Algiers only, when, at that time, no attack had been registered against UN staff for the last ten years. An Inter-Agency Security Assessment team went to Algeria in June 2006, and the review recommended Algeria be reclassified as Phase I, with the exception of the mountainous regions of a number of *Wilaya*), where in fact the UN had no programs to conduct, taking into consideration the strong support provided by the authorities for every trip inside the country. Algerian authorities were providing armed escorts for all missions traveling outside the capital.

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26. In practical terms, the manner in which the UN was operating in Algiers more closely resembled that of a higher phase, which is illustrative of the politicization of the security phase system. This was reflected in the fact that no missions were allowed to leave the capital city without an armed police escort, all field missions required prior government approval, and very few dependents were present in the country.

D. The Security Plan

27. With the exception of shatter-resistant film, the mitigating measures in place were inadequate to protect against the most critical threat identified in the SRA, i.e. a vehicle borne explosive device. On the question as to whether or not the most appropriate security phase was in effect, the reality is that even if the country had been in Phase III, this would not have protected the building itself from a powerful vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), but possibly could have reduced casualties by reducing the number of staff present at this duty station.

28. In addition, it appears that the UN in Algiers was unprepared for any type of catastrophic event, even though the SRA flagged such a critical threat. For example, there was no alternate coordination centre identified in the security plan despite the fact that the major threat could have compromised the use of the UN building and despite the fact that any other UN building in Algiers could have been designated as an alternate.

29. In November 2007, after conducting security training for the SMT in Morocco, the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the DSS West Africa Desk traveled to Algiers to meet with the Designated Official, the Security Advisor, SMT members, Algerian authorities, and security officials from a number of embassies. The initial plan was to also provide security training for the DO and Security Management Team in Algeria. However, this training was cancelled notwithstanding previously agreed upon dates but because just prior to the OIC's departure for Algiers several members of the SMT had indicated that they were not available to attend this training; three heads-of-agency would be retiring before the end of the year. All other agency representatives were ad-interim. For these reasons, it was decided that the training would be conducted in 2008. The DO also noted that UNDSS had not provided a mission report of this trip. However, UNDSS confirms that verbal feedback was provided to the DO and SA at the conclusion of the mission which, for the reasons cited in paragraph 20 above, did not include any recommendation to modify or improve the current security arrangements for the UN House.

E. Crisis Communications

30. Prior to the attack on 11 December, there was a radio room set-up in the reception of the UN house, consisting of VHF, HF radios, and a Mini-M satellite phone. UNHCR was in the process of installing its own radio room at its premises at the time of the bombing to service its Tindouf operations. The UN had 2 VHF frequencies licensed for Algiers and 2 for Tindouf prior to the bombing. Six HF frequencies were licensed to WFP, only. The UN had applied for additional frequencies; as of today these frequencies have not been approved. There was a common-use repeater installed at the UN building which was damaged during the blast. The

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Repeater was restored within hours of the WFP FITTEST team's arrival, i.e. 26 hours after the blast. Commercially, 3 GMS/mobile networks were available and extensively used by the UN agencies.

31. The clearance and release of UN communications equipment by the Algerian authorities has been problematic. To date, the latest batch of UN communications equipment dispatched after the bombing, remains in Government custody.

32. Predicated on our experience with communications following the bombing, it will be necessary to thoroughly review what can be considered as a baseline Minimum Operating Security Standard to raise the level of preparedness at all duty stations, particularly crisis communications capacity. For example, a mobile satellite phone should be operational at every site, regardless of security phase.

33. The base-line MOSS document, on 21 July 2004, provides a solid basis for independent communications from Phase I and up, however some issues need to be clarified.

- The meaning of the cited "independent radio network" has to be clarified so it is clear that the UN should operate and manage the radio network and the hardware.
- The "Use of Cell Phones for MOSS Emergency Communications Systems" is open to interpretations. As such it should be amended in a way clearly stating that mobile phones are never to be used as a sole replacement for security telecommunications in order to ensure MOSS compliance.
- One satellite phone should always be available off site in case an office is destroyed. In the interest of limiting costs, sharing arrangements should be made among UN agencies.
- Emergency contact lists must be available at all UN offices.

F. Staff Lists

34. The staff lists for Algiers that were available to DSS New York were dated August 2007. The staff lists at the duty station were kept in the office of the Security Adviser which suffered the brunt of the attack. However, DSS sent the most recent version to the UN Country Team (UNCT) immediately after the attack. There was no up-to-date information available regarding who was present in Algiers at the time of the attack. This resulted in significant delays in identifying the dead and the missing. However, according to the DO, information on the dead and missing was only available and confirmed after the search for the bodies, that took two days, was completed and no information was released prior to the identification. People were listed as missing pending formal identification. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, headquarters of the organizations present in Algiers did not have accurate lists of their staff members. Some were also unaware of which of their staff might be on mission status.

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35. Accounting for victims was problematic. Many UN agency representatives had limited staff lists both in their respective Headquarters and offices in Algiers. Files destroyed in the blast severely hampered the DO and SMT's ability to ascertain who was killed, injured and unaccounted for. The lack of a centralized UN staff tracking system weighed heavily on DSS' ability to account for everyone within a reasonable period of time.

36. Staff members traveling on mission to any country where a security phase has been declared are required to obtain security clearance from the Designated Official. This clearance is sought and granted through an Integrated Security Clearance and Tracking (ISECT) system. The purpose of this system is to ensure that the Designated Official is aware at all times of the presence of UN system personnel at the duty station. Despite this procedure, some staff elected to travel without clearance. As a result, it is not always possible to know with any degree of certainty who is at a particular duty station at any given time.

G. Security Arrangements for National Staff

37. Based on a review of the security plan, the arrangements in place for national staff were consistent with measures agreed at the inter-agency level. However, the Algerian authorities were not prepared to permit national staff to carry radios without a government provided license, which in effect impacted negatively on the attainable level of MOSS compliance

38. The staff re-location plan identified three cities inside Algeria that could be used to get national staff out of harm's way: Oran, Ghardia, and Annaba. Alternate means of transport such as air and train, as well as likely venues for accommodation were fully explored and evaluated for advantage of time and distance.

39. National staff within the UN system were full partners in the development of security, crisis, and contingency planning. There exist several local national staff associations that had open and candid access and discussions with the UNDSS Security Advisor. Owing to some agencies having only national staff in the country, several of the key national staff attended some of the SMT meetings and were partners in the decision-making process.

V. Response to the attack

A. Crisis Management Arrangements in Algiers

40. Amongst the victims of this attack was the DSS Security Adviser, Babacar Ndiaye, who lost his life. DSS was therefore hampered in the first few hours following the blast in its effort to render assistance. However, by coincidence, Mr. Andries Dreyer, the UNICEF Regional Security Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa, was in Algiers to assess UNICEF's security. He immediately assumed the DSS SA role, taking charge of the scene management for the UN. The main response to the bombing in terms of search and rescue was provided by the Algerian Civil Defense Forces who, according to Mr. Dreyer, were very committed to trying to find the victims buried when the building collapsed. Mr. Dreyer was greatly assisted by the ILO acting OIC. Within 24 to 48 hours, professional security officers from DSS, UNDP, UNFPA,

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UNHCR, WFP and telecommunications specialists from WFP FITTEST arrived in country to provide assistance.

41. Also immediately following the attack, the Designated Official, who was wounded in the attack, organized an SMT and together they greatly contributed to the organization and coordination of emergency actions, notably with respect to wounded colleagues, the families of the victims and the evacuation of critically wounded staff.

42. Security assets, including vehicles and communications equipment had been compromised in the blast. Paramount to the response was getting survivors out of harm's way in case there was a secondary explosion and convincing the Government of Algeria to reinforce security at the remaining UN premises in the city.

42. It is important to note that DSS still does not have a proper SURGE capacity for crisis response.

B. Critical Incident Stress Counseling and Family Support

43. Within 32 hours of the incident, two critical incident stress counselors from DSS (one French-speaking and one Arabic-speaking), and one counselor from UNHCR arrived in Algiers to provide psycho-social support to the victims and their families. The purpose of their mission was to conduct a rapid needs assessment, coordinate and provide essential psychological support services to all UN staff, (injured and non-injured), and to the families of the deceased personnel. They were also there to provide technical advice to the Designated Official and the SMT and to establish a country-level psychological response plan of action, which included the need to recruit local counselors to support the UN family in Algiers to deal with the psychological impact of the attack, and to follow up, as required, with those UN personnel who were medically evacuated to locations outside Algiers.

44. The team established a staff psychosocial task force, composed of counselors and managers from DSS' Critical Incident Stress Management Unit (CISMU), as well as support personnel from agencies, programs and funds based in Algiers. Meetings were organized to provide all UN staff an opportunity to vent and to facilitate mutual support among staff. Individual counseling sessions were also organized. Visits were undertaken to Al Moustafa and Al Azhar Hospitals to meet with the wounded staff, action was taken to ensure that staff evacuated abroad would be provided with the necessary psychological support upon arrival. Direct support was provided to families during the recovery of the remains from the UNDP Office. Direct support was also provided to the spouse of Babacar Ndiaye when she arrived from Senegal.

45. While the response to the crisis was determined to be good, improvements would include increasing the number of counselors who are deployed because those who were in Algiers were quickly overtaxed by the significant demand. A larger team of counselors responding to a mass casualty situation such as this one would have enabled a more consistent approach. Further work is also required in terms of long-term follow up of the victims and their families.

C. Liaison with the Government

46. As mentioned in paragraph 7, the DO's principal contact in the Government of Algeria was with the Director of Protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) who is the coordinator for all interlocutors with the Algerian government. Any contacts with the higher echelons of the Algerian Police or issues regarding, for example, customs clearances for UN communication equipment must be processed through this channel.

47. Following the 11 December bombings, it was evident that the Algerian Government was very concerned about UN intentions to continue its operations in country. There was a clear political angle inherent in the dialogue that ensued. A continued UN presence and sustained program activity was a clear priority in the dialogue with the Algerian government. This concern mirrored the GoA's political statement about the fight against terrorism and the determination not to flinch under any circumstance. Thus, the review of UN security measures in Algeria had to be conducted in close consultation with the GoA, without compromising UN security standards. This dialogue required coordination within the UN system and direct involvement from UN HQ senior management as a follow up to the Secretary-General's visit that took place on 18 December. During the visit of the Secretary-General to the site of the bombing, an offer of land was made to the Secretary-General by the Algerian President during their meeting 18 December. Subsequently, the Algerian Permanent Representative in New York, during the meeting with the UNDSS USG and Division of Regional Operations, said the amount of land being offered was a 6,000 square meter piece of land in the Diplomatic area. This is currently under consideration. *acuss?*

48. While in Algeria, the UNDSS Under Secretary-General and Director of Regional Operations requested the Government of Algeria to complete its investigation of the events of 11 December quickly and to provide their assessment of the present threat to the UN in Algeria. The establishment of an interim location for UNDP from which to conduct UN business was a top priority, coupled with a long-term search for new UNDP premises which meets foreseeable security requirements. The provision of protection measures at the provisional UNICEF premises was and remains a critical issue. Staff welfare, of course, was of immediate concern.

D. UNDSS New York Crisis Management Response

49. DSS activated its Crisis Coordination Centre (DSSCCC) at 0450 (NY time) on 11 December 2007 following notification of the bombing in Algiers from the Deputy to the USG, UNDSS. Key staff members began arriving as early as 0530; however, it was not until nearly three hours later that DSSCCC had a fully functioning crisis response team. DSS does not have a standing crisis management team nor does it have a fully staffed operations centre. On duty during the time of notification was one GS-6 staff member who mans the DSS Communications Centre. This presented a challenge during the initial response phase as the number of calls into the DSSCCC soon began to overwhelm the limited staff members that had arrived. This resulted in the fact that DSSCCC was not able to immediately respond to requests for information and hampered DSSCCC in making initial contact with the key members in Algeria.

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50. As the DSSCCC came up to strength by reassigning personnel, it was able to take on primary actions focusing on acquiring and maintaining situational awareness, monitoring follow-up actions in response to security-related support requests from the field, identification and deployment of DSS security professionals in support of the security team on the ground, conducting twice daily teleconferences with agency representatives both in New York and Europe, taking control of the Integrated Security Clearance & Tracking (ISECT) system from the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), providing the focal point for all entities regarding those staff members killed or injured, and providing periodic Situation Reports to not only the UN leadership in New York, but also to all Agencies, Funds, Programmes and Departments concerned. In particular, the teleconferences and situation reports (SITREPs) were an effective means of ensuring the latest information was being passed to key stakeholders.

51. It is important to note that DSS still does not have a proper crisis coordination center, lacks adequate IT to include secure communications and crisis communications infrastructure and an adequate number of professional staff exclusively trained for the role. This has severely hampered DSS' ability to professionally manage crises. Due to this deficiency, the current crisis was managed from the UNICEF Operations Center during its initial hours.

E. Response by Headquarters of UN Agencies, Programmes and Funds

52. All UN organizations with a presence in Algiers participated in the DSS teleconferences. However, in some organizations the participants changed from day-to-day resulting in a lack of continuity. It is critical in a crisis of this type that a single focal point is assigned to represent each organization and that the focal point will follow through on decisions made by the teleconference. In addition, it is critical that agency focal points be available at all times. In some instances it was not possible to contact the security focal point of an organization for several hours after the event had occurred.

53. Most of the organizations involved had difficulty ~~establishing which staff they had on the ground in Algiers.~~ One organization took 72 hours to confirm the names of its staff. Complaints had also been registered by the acting SA managing the crisis regarding telephone calls he had received direct from the focal points of some organizations, in one instance demanding that the security personnel provide lists of staff direct to the organization.

F. Media Issues

54. Management of the media and provision of information was an issue of concern. The presence of a representative from the Office of the Spokesperson was extremely helpful in ensuring that the spokesperson was fully aware of developments.

55. The issue of press releases and media contact presented challenges that should be addressed in the fullness of time. It is essential that no uncoordinated press statements be made. There is a clear need therefore to establish a precise mechanism such as that which is contained in the hostage incident management policy which could be viewed as best practice.

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56. Further attention should be given to the issue of how and by whom the Spokesperson's Office is to release information concerning the numbers of fatalities and their names. All efforts must be made to confirm beyond a doubt the identity of the victims and to ensure that their next of kin are informed by the employing organization. The need to provide information to the media must be governed by these requirements.

VI. Recommendations – The way forward...

A. Security Step Change

57. The role and place of the United Nations within Al Qaeda's ideology and doctrine has gradually increased in prominence. Whilst in the late 1990s the UN was identified as a supporter of the "crusaders", in 2006 it was labeled by Al Qaeda as an "entity hostile to Islam and a partner in crime" (of the West). In 2007, not only political branches of the UN, but also its humanitarian programmes, were rhetorically attacked by Al Qaeda as "direct enemies aiming to change the fabric of Muslim society."

58. The above ideological foundation has placed the entire Organization on Al Qaeda's priority target list, together with foreign diplomatic missions, military contingents, national law enforcement and security forces, as well as other targets. Due to the nature of UN activities, which require UN personnel to operate in close proximity with local populations, the UN can be perceived by Al Qaeda and its followers as a 'soft' target, more vulnerable in comparison to others. Whilst the UN is considered a global target for Al Qaeda, it specifically threatened the Organization in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan.

59. A pattern has emerged. When regional or local extremist groups pledge allegiance to Al Qaeda, they adopt its ideology, strategy, tactics, techniques and procedures, as well as Al Qaeda's target list comprising the UN. This represents a material threat to the UN in countries and areas where they may have the operational reach and/or capacity to attack.

60. Terrorist threats to the UN, not only in Algeria but worldwide, have dramatically increased after the 11 December 2007 attack on UN offices. Al Qaeda endeavors to conduct dramatic terrorist acts involving mass casualties and large-scale devastation aimed to immediately draw public and media attention and claim responsibility for committed crimes that constitute Al Qaeda's methods of displaying its power and providing its constituents with examples of success. In this regard, from dozens of high-profile crimes committed by Al Qaeda in Algeria, the attack on UN offices drew the greatest attention from the entire international community making the UN, in the view of terrorists, the most recognizable international target, an attack on which would always be noticed and recognized.

61. In view of this sea change in the UN's threat profile – worldwide – but most particular in the swath of extremism that permeates in the key hostile environments, the UN Security Management System has had to adapt its approach to addressing this critical and dramatically altered threat. Overarching in this shift is the need to improve the UN's image and advocacy of the UN's neutrality.

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62. A rapid paradigm shift in programme priorities to allow a concentration in areas where the threat is now most pronounced will require a substantial investment in security. The foremost challenge will be the balancing of program objectives against the need to provide for the safety and security of staff. Security will be a core cost of doing business.

63. Furthermore, a rigorous review of the Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) threshold and rationalization of the threat and risk equation must be undertaken. An immediate global risk and threat assessment, beginning with countries where extremist cells are known to operate, concludes unequivocally that:

- The UN is under an extremist threat.
- The threat could be carried out anywhere at any time. There is no UN capacity to predict attacks.
- Terrorists are prepared to wait a very long time.
- The attacks will be methodically planned following extensive surveillance.

64. In view of this,

- Consideration should be given to elevating the MOSS for those duty stations designated as 'No Phase, Phase I or Phase II' duty stations and to adopting security measures currently used for duty stations designated as Phase III
- Programme priorities must be reviewed, especially in countries where there are emergency and other life-saving activities. We must determine options for enabling activities whilst maintaining staff safety and security as a high priority.
- The capacity of the UNSMS needs to be strengthened and adapted to the new threat environment. In this respect, there is a dire need to ensure that, globally, Designated Officials and members of their Security Management Teams are provided with a level of security and crisis management training commensurate with their responsibilities and that this be made mandatory. Such training should include extensive practical exercises. Most particularly, Designated Officials and Security Management Teams must be fully aware of their responsibility and accountability. More time must be allocated to their training. This point merits specific management review.
- A mechanism must be put in place to determine how effectively Designated Officials and SMT members are carrying out their responsibilities, as regards staff security, and to address deficiencies.
- The training program for coping with Mass Casualties must be finalized, rolled-out to all duty stations for implementation as a matter of priority.

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- The crisis management capacity of DSS is still severely lacking. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency, particularly regarding SURGE, communications, staffing of the UNDSS Crisis Coordination Centre (including provision for a trained professional in casualty assistance) and the need to ensure there are a sufficient number of critical incident stress counselors that may be deployed in the event of a crisis.
- Sufficient resources must be devoted to ensuring the long-term follow-up for victims and their families in the case of an event resulting in the death and/or injury of UN system staff.
- There is a need to review the job description of security advisers as it is much too extensive. The Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) should, therefore, review what is expected of security advisers and amend the description accordingly.
- Should a decision be made to send senior officials to the site of a security incident to handle the ensuing political issues, it is critical that a second tier of operational managers be deployed immediately to handle the crisis management issues.
- The UN's crisis response capacity, particularly for mass casualty incidents, needs to be resourced adequately to compensate for the lack of dedicated crisis management personnel, equipment and facilities.
- It is critical in a crisis of this type that a single focal point is assigned to represent each organization and that the focal point is not only available at all times during the crisis but will also follow through on any decisions directed by UNDSS' Crisis Coordination Centre.
- To avoid the arrival of large numbers of staff from different organizations at a crisis scene, a protocol needs to be established on an inter-agency basis, which permits a small group of staff to handle all matters that arise on site, on behalf of the UN system. This protocol would also require provisions for the delegation of financial matters.
- A strategy needs to be adopted early in any crisis regarding how to release information concerning the incident, including the numbers of fatalities and names of the victims. In this respect, there is a clear need to establish precise procedures and protocols.
- There is a need to ensure a centralized UN staff tracking system to be able, in the event of a crisis, to account for staff within a reasonable period of time.

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- The current nature of the terrorist threat to the UN requires not only the development of an effective mechanism of communication with Host Country security services, but also the strengthening of analytical capabilities in the field.
- There is a need to revisit the SRA process to ensure clarity of understanding among all concerned parties.

65. In order for security to be managed properly, adequate resources are required both for DSS and for Organizations. The High Level Committee on Management has accepted that DSS is under-resourced to do the work. However, members of the UN Security Management System have stated that any increase in budgetary requirements cannot be financed through the current cost-sharing arrangements due to their financial limitations.

66. Serious and urgent consideration needs to be given to the question of common premises versus single agency office locations. An argument in favor of a common UN premise is that it may be easier to secure a single location than it is to secure several offices scattered throughout the city. It may be argued that it is never possible to achieve 100 percent protection against those who are ready to conduct attacks against the United Nations. However, the more staff concentrated in one location, the more attractive the target.

67. In light of the 11 December bombing in Algiers, we have learned valuable lessons, both at the strategic and tactical levels which will serve to buttress the UN's Security System. Most particularly, we see the need for a top-down approach. Member states and those hosting UN missions, programs and funds, must agree to and live up to their responsibility to protect staff and UN resources present in their country.