

## Our focus: Security versus humanitarian aid and information necessities? Read our interview and analysis pages 2-5

Picture yourself inspecting detention facilities in Iraq within an international organization and you can hear an armed insurgency raging outside, and not totally sure that the insurgents would be reasonably benevolent towards you. How would you react? Security can become a delicate issue for some professions, namely humanitarian aid workers and journalists in hostile environments. They both have to balance obligations to be in the field and the necessity to be safe.

Do security requirements prevent you from doing your job, or do they empower you to do it in a safe manner? ASP proposes to highlight the topic with a cross-look from a Humanitarian Aid specialist and an international journalist. Both have experienced working in conflict zones and hostile environments.

### ASP interview

**Martin Damary:** Currently office manager at the International Association for Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) and former Delegate and Head of office for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).



**Anne Chaon:** International journalist with more than 20 years of experience, currently Agence France- Presse Special Correspondent in Kabul (Afghanistan).



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**ASP Question:** What are the main difficulties encountered to balance and conciliate your obligation to be in the field and the necessity to be safe?

**Martin Damary:** Staying safe has always been a pre-requisite for humanitarian actors, whether they are deployed in natural disasters or in areas of armed conflict. Today, we have the feeling that the situation for humanitarians has been degraded, in that attacks are more common, more deadly, and no longer essentially the work of “rogue elements” such as deserters, but the policy of many armed actors. State authorities in many contexts also are viewing NGOs with increased suspicion, so the context is clearly degraded.

At the same time, the “humanitarian imperative” means that we cannot simply sit back and watch from afar. A recent tendency amongst aid agencies is to give more responsibilities to national staff, who, in many cases are better accepted by society than foreigners, are more able to pass by unnoticed, and who often have a much better network providing the information to stay out of harms’ way. Regrettably, as recent incidents have shown (such as the slaying of six ICRC workers in Afghanistan), this is not either a foolproof solution.

**ASP Question:** Which approach/strategy has been proposed or adopted to facilitate your work?

**Anne Chaon:** Get the proper, accurate information about dangers and risks. I will ask my contacts to meet me at my office or in safe well-known controlled places. If this is not possible or if I have to move to the field, I will try to be as discreet as possible, wearing long black abaya, avoiding unnecessary talk in foreign language and make sure to get the right contact, and to never have to ask my way. The rule is to stay a maximum of 20 minutes in an unknown or unsafe environment. Meanwhile I strictly avoid any routine: never go twice to the same place at the same time, avoid places crowded with foreigners, restaurants, bars and avoid certain neighborhood of course.

**Martin Damary** I was once in a mission composed of unarmed observers, a peace-building mission in a highly volatile context. Half of our staff was active military or police, the other half were civilians who had learned one or the other of the local languages. Although I was part of the leadership of this mission, I was very uncomfortable with the “security” side of things, because our behavior was essentially dictated by the military. We were issued with flak jackets and helmets, and we used an armored car for patrols. The simplistic military solution to staying safe was to try to put distance and armor between us and potential danger, this solution was, I am convinced, detrimental to the mission itself (observation was not carried out in optimum conditions) and to security (we were considered akin to the armed forces, which were themselves the targets of attack). To cap it all, the officer in charge of security, asked that we construct and stock and armory, and add high walls, barbed wire, watchtowers and spotlights to our base –, it showed how out of touch he was with the realities of the terrain.

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Without going to such extremes, the normal approach to security management is to ensure constant contact with all armed actors, to make ourselves known, to do everything to convince these armed actors that we are neutral and impartial, that we are not a threat in any way, and that our work is dedicated exclusively to relieve suffering. This approach has its limits, of course, especially when faced with actors who reject the very concept of shared humanity, or for whom civilian suffering is a key component of the tactics. When there are incidents, the very first reaction is to cease work, and to reach out to the armed actors, to try to understand the incident and to obtain renewed security assurances.

### **Being blissfully unaware of many of the threats**

I came across my first “security advisor”, a former British army officer, familiar with the context we were working in. He was initially shocked to discover the ICRC’s security concept, which went against all his training as an officer. For him, “force protection” meant that his very first mission was to protect his assets, human and material. For him, the risks we undertook to reach the victims of the conflict were quite a surprise. But he learned to understand and accept this. What he also discovered is that, as civilians, we often were blissfully unaware of many of the threats we were facing. His job was to point these out and to adapt our security to take these factors into account.

### **Organization must be able to show that it has provided security as diligently as possible**

The context of this last example is, I believe, an important one. My team was tasked with inspecting Coalition detention facilities: Camp Cropper, Abu-Ghraib, and Camp Bucca, for example. Once we were inside these facilities, we were reasonably safe, although one could never discount attacks by detainees, nor be sure that some incoming mortar shell might be fired towards the base and explode near us. Outside the bases was a wholly different story. An armed insurgency was raging, we could not be totally certain that the insurgents would be reasonably benevolent towards us, and at the same time, the Coalition soldiers were highly nervous, and watched our (announced) approach of their bases with suspicion.

Our solution in this context was to go undercover. We had local-looking cars, we did not use the Red Cross emblem (the hand of Fatima was more common), and we dressed in a discreet way, and changed our route each day. Only in the final approach to the base did we exhibit our Red Cross flags. The situation was not ideal. The situation was very tense and we certainly were taking risks, in a context where UN and ICRC staff had already paid with their lives. We knew the risks, but we were determined to do our job and to come out alive. We succeeded, but later (after we had been replaced by others), tragedy struck, in particular with one of our drivers being murdered just outside Abu-Ghraib.

So was it worth it? Was our mission so “imperative”, that we had to put our lives, and the lives of colleagues, at higher risk? I don’t know. In my opinion, organizations issue these rules with two imperatives in mind. Staff security is the paramount one. But there is another less visible one: responsibility. If there is an incident, the organization must be able to show that it has provided security as diligently as possible. This was one aspect that I struggled with, because it meant that some security rules were potentially ill conceived – I felt that this secondary imperative could distract for the main paramount imperative.

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**ASP Question: What are/what would be the main criteria of professionalism for a security company in charge of humanitarian aid workers/journalists in conflict environment?**

**Anne Chaon:** Understand the situation, getting the right information and the right contacts, with every side/party of the conflict if possible and to know perfectly the ground, namely map, city, roads. At this condition it is possible and acceptable to impose the choice to go or not to go. If you get the proper information, “this road is not safe we don’t go” you can be respected and listened to.

**Martin Damary:** I never collaborated with such a company. Security, in my own experience, has always been a matter of personal adaptation: in-house security teams, and coordination with official and unofficial armed actors, be they the police, the armed forces, armed non-State actors. Nevertheless, I would say that the main criteria for such companies would be (a) a full understanding of the context in which we operate, just as we always try to develop (b) a full understanding that “image” is in itself a key criterion for security (c) that neutrality is fundamental for a successful humanitarian mission, and so the contractor must be able to demonstrate total neutrality in the context, just as humanitarian actors do (d) that the use of armor, guns, and other assorted heavy-duty protection gear is only to be used as a last resort, because they are themselves potentially a factor in degrading our image and increasing the potential for attacks (e) that there are no taboos, that reaching out to armed groups of all shapes and sizes is part of the security set-up.

The armed forces informed our team that some insurgents were planning an attack in the general vicinity, and that they refused to allow us out of the base (we had been visiting a detention center) without an escort. To my mind, the use of an escort, which in itself would have been a target for insurgents, was an even greater risk than going it alone – not to mention the more general risk, detrimental to our image, that observers would associate the ICRC with the Occupation forces. The compromise was that we would indeed go it alone, but that an army patrol follows us, as far back as possible whilst still maintaining visuals. Was it a good compromise? I don’t know, but we did make it to our next destination safely – there was no attack.

**ASP Question: Are the security requirements for humanitarian aid workers in hostile environments more and more important?**

**Anne Chaon:** Yes and this is why most of the medias company send their staff to follow “hostile environment training” usually organised by ex Special Forces. We are trained to adjust a dangerous environment and dangerous situations, landmines, shelling, suicide attackers, snipers, and also to give the first aid saving life cares. It became absolutely necessary, and also to know how to cope – if possible –with kidnappings situation to avoid panic and unnecessary reaction if it happened.

**Martin Damary:** No. Security requirements have always been important. I don’t think I have ever collaborated with any agency that did not consider staff security to be paramount. As mentioned earlier, the enhanced risks that we face have been taken into account by the humanitarian agencies, which have reacted by issuing stricter security rules and procedures, increasing security training, and increasing support for us when we are victims of attack.



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## ARGUS point of view

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The subject of Private Security Companies (PSC) is sensitive in the aid world, with International Organizations (IO) and news agencies. For many years there was confusion and a misunderstanding between Private Security Companies and Mercenaries. The use of PSCs was therefore frowned upon in certain European countries. Today the use of PSCs is more common and companies like ASP have standards of ethics and transparency, are signatories of the Montreux Document (Pertinent International legal obligations relating to private military and security companies and good practices – International Committee of the Red Cross) and are compliant with the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Companies (ICoCA).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), News Agencies and International Organization operating in hostile environments need to consider the fact that Threats may be triggered by how the organization positions itself in a conflictual environment, how it designs and implements its programs or how it could act in a way that could be considered provocative. The Security strategies ideally developed are: Acceptance, Protection and Deterrence.

These three approaches constitute a range of options from soft to hard, from seeking acceptance and consent, adopting protective procedures and devices to threatening with counter-violence. Seeking acceptance and reducing vulnerabilities is the most common approach for NGOs, News Agencies and IO but acceptance cannot always be guaranteed and not effective against all threats. A deterrence strategy, with armed men, can create, in some cases, more problems than it solves.

Argus Security Projects offers security services for Aid workers, NGOs, and International Organizations that is not limited to the use of armed men and escort. Our services range from information and analysis, Security Risk Assessments, provision of personnel (experts/guards/QRF) to project and management services and training. Our training package for Aid workers, news agencies are diverse, from providing general security awareness, battlefield and hostage survival, route reconnaissance and navigation to cultural sensitivity, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and special sessions on extreme weather conditions.

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## Company profile

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Argus Security Projects is an international security company providing comprehensive and tailored protective services, logistics, procurements and training; Our clients are from the defense, energy and financial sectors, as well as high net-worth clients, diplomatic missions and international organisations operating in high risk, volatile, hostile and complex environments.

Our added value in the international security industry landscape is based on our approach: ASP's goal is to propose mitigation services and strategies to avoid all together, manage, control and/or minimize the risks that may affect its client's operation.

We are currently deployed in challenging environments in Africa, Middle East and Balkans. Our field of experience acquired since 1997 has positioned our company within the security industry landscape as a professional provider.



The Holding structure includes in particular **ASP International** (based in Cyprus) managed by Louis Retby-Pradeau in charge of MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa zone, **ASP Mauritania**, with M. Ghassan Hanna as country Manager, ensuring security service to several important companies, including Total and Kinross, **ASP Balkans** operating in the Balkans since 20 years now and managed by M. Srdjan Kabadaic, **and ASP USA**, headed by Thierry Rouffaud, and Haig Melkessetian which just signed a strategic agreement with Constellis (Olive Group, Academy Triple Canopy, Edinburgh International). The Holding structure also includes 14 additional companies in MENA, Africa and the Caribbean.

## A closer look at ASP Balkans

Within the ASP Group, ASP Balkans has operated independently since 2001 providing a wide range of services, provision of risk assessments, security guards, close protection teams, cash in transit services, investigations for the diplomatic, government, energy and banking sectors. The company's regional headquarters are located in Belgrade, from where it coordinates its offices located in Podgorica and Pristina furthermore we have extended our capabilities to Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina and FYROM within the framework of teaming agreements signed with local partners thus allowing a complete coverage of the South Eastern Balkans.

ASP Balkans has a very solid base allowing the handling of all sort of projects with a professional, technical and compliant approach to offer tailored security and logistic solutions at cost-effective rates

### Recent contracts for ASP Balkans

Argus Security Project Balkans (ASP – Balkans) has been awarded the 4 years contract for “*security services for the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia*” this December 2016. This is the fourth contract awarded to Argus following a call for tender for similar services at the EU Delegation in Serbia.

Argus Security Project Balkans (ASP – Balkans) won a 1-year contract for the Physical Security Services to UN-Eco building in Podgorica, Montenegro. This is the second UN contract awarded to ASP Balkans for security services at UN organisation inside the UN ECO building, namely UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM.



### Recent contracts for ASP Montenegro

Argus Security Project Montenegro, together with a local partner, ARB Security, won a 4 years contract (48 months) with the European Union Delegation in the Republic of Albania. This contract includes the provision of security services (security guards team, patrolling, installation, monitoring and servicing of the alarm system).

## A closer look to ASP Mauritania

ASP Mauritania, operating since 2014, is specialized in high standard security services. Our main clients are working in the Mining and Oil & Gas industry and they decided to trust our company to protect their expatriate staff with our trained drivers, escort's patrols, close protection, security agent and security guards services. Our comprehensive tailored services package starts from the airport, at the arrival of the clients.



## Security Guard Training: a new ASP quality Standard

Several issues are addressed within the framework of the security guard training (level 1) recently created by Argus Security Projects (ASP), ranging from Human rights to use of force according to local law.

The objective is simple: to guarantee a quality standard for the customers by ensuring that the rules of ethics and the procedures are well integrated by the staff who will operate on the ground. *"Our priority is to ensure that rules and operating procedures are applied, particularly in countries at risk. For example, it seems essential that local guards understand and assimilate the fact that in no circumstances they should replace the local police"*, explained Ghassan Hanna, ASP country Manager in Mauritania.

The first round of training was conducted in Mauritania. 40 local security guards employed by ASP under a contract with the mining company Kinross were trained. *"We have developed a comprehensive internal training with a global approach,"* continues Ghassan Hanna, *they are now an integral part of our proposals under current and future contracts.* The subjects covered meet international standards of quality such as human rights (according to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights), the framework for the use of force in accordance with local law, risk reduction measures, conflict management among staff, the international code of conduct ICOCA, of which ARGUS is certified member.



