

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
8 September 1997

Item 3.2 Demobilization

Demobilization usually takes place in and is part of an extremely volatile political, economic, military and social environment. “Demobilization” (for the purposes of this paper) refers to a wide range of processes and activities including but not limited to planning, coordination and implementation of registration, disarmament, quartering, provision of security for ex-combatants, demobilization, reinsertion, vocational training, reintegration, assistance to family areas, civic training, attention to underage and disabled ex-combatants etc. All these activities are one, albeit critical, aspect of consolidating the peace and the larger political/economic country situation.

A demobilization process therefore requires the participation of the national authorities, the warring parties and a host of other entities each contributing critical components and expertise to the planning and implementation of an integrated strategy: political (SRSG, DPA, Member States), military (national army, other warring parties, UN peacekeeping operations), economic, development and social (World Bank, UN humanitarian and development organizations, IOM, national and international NGOs), and financial (donor governments, Bretton Woods). Demobilization thus calls for an integrated approach among different components of the international community (when it is requested to assist).

Quartering, Demobilization, Reintegration - who is responsible?

Overall integrated planning, coordination and supervision of demobilization processes by a multilateral institution, in cooperation with the national or transitory authorities and conflicting parties, is often considered an urgent requirement in a post-cease-fire situation, and a prerequisite for a durable peace and reconstruction process. However, no multilateral institution has been mandated to officially take on such a role as yet. Nor, within the United Nations, has any entity been designated as responsible for demobilization. Rather, on an ad hoc basis different entities (World Bank, DHA, DPKO) have either been created or taken or been given the lead in the demobilization process; sometimes with a formal designation, sometimes not.

In Angola and Liberia, DHA has recently been responsible for planning, strategic and operational coordination, and at times, implementation of broadly defined humanitarian aspects of demobilization processes. The burden of this involvement has been found to unduly interfere

with the effective performance of DHA's primary mandate of humanitarian coordination. The IASC as well as the Secretary-General have re-affirmed that the Office of the ERC should focus on coordination and not get directly involved in operational activities.

What is needed for UN involvement in demobilization?

In considering what is necessary for UN involvement in demobilization, the IASC needs to look beyond the demobilization activities in which it is usually involved, and consider the planning and coordination requirements for the overall "demobilization" process and how this may contribute to the overall peace process, including reconciliation and recovery.

At Headquarters: An institutional memory and expertise

A small headquarters capacity where the United Nation's institutional memory can reside, i.e., a unit with demobilization materials, research, studies, rosters of experienced staff, and expertise that can be drawn upon by the field.

At Field level: Operational coordination

At the field level, the challenge is the reinsertion of large numbers of armed belligerents into society as peaceful, productive and unarmed members of that society. To meet that challenge, one entity must be charged with responsibility for the orchestration of the diverse entities involved in the demobilization processes.

The institutional capacity at the field level must:

- 1) ensure early, comprehensive and integrated planning and ensuring implementation of all phases, activities and aspects of demobilization;
- 2) interface and coordinate with all entities involved (including parties to conflict, member states, UN agencies, NGOs, International Organizations, donors, etc);
- 3) undertake activities that do not fall within any organization's mandate, i.e. registration of ex-combatants, political negotiations on provision of assistance; as well as "filling gaps". (Part of the reason DHA became so "involved" in coordination was to fill gaps.)

Important considerations

In deciding what entity(ies) should be responsible, the following issues must be considered:

- 1) **a civilian-humanitarian/development orientation**

Although demobilization is part of a wider political process and has military and security ramifications, the civilian aspect of demobilization should be emphasized in order to reduce militarization and ensure effective reintegration. Disarmament, quartering, and demobilization are the beginning of a long, primarily socio-economic process.

Some important actors, namely NGOs and humanitarian and development organizations are reluctant and/or constitutionally unable to “feed soldiers” and/or are hesitant to work closely with military bodies, such as peace-keeping operations.

2) **familiarity with local conditions**

Familiarity with local conditions facilitates the early planning and coordination of a complex process. Knowledge of the country situation, and familiarity and confidence of the warring parties and other participants in the demobilization process is essential.

3) **collaboration and partnership**

Planning and coordination of demobilization demands close cooperation, collaboration and coordination with a panoply of partners who are willing to collaborate, but will not report to another institution as part of a command and control hierarchy.

4) **flexibility**

The entity responsible should have adaptable and flexible administrative, operational and policy procedures and the capacity to support and respond to the field, in order to respond quickly to the inevitable changes in a post-cessation environment.

5) **sensitivity to beneficiaries and ability to work with beneficiaries** (includes ex-combatants and accompanying family members)

Options

The IASC should recommend to the Secretary-General one of two options. In both options, the field based entity would be accountable to the SRSG or the RC/HC as appropriate.

1) **Mandate one UN entity with the responsibility for demobilization at both Headquarters and field level**

One entity would be mandated to be responsible for planning, coordinating and ensuring implementation, within a larger framework, of all demobilization processes whenever the assistance of the United Nations is requested. This entity would draw upon the expertise and resources of a multitude of other entities, just as UNHCR works to protect and care for refugees within a larger framework and with the cooperation of other agencies.

Such an entity could be within the Secretariat, a UN agency or programme, or an international organization. The entity to be given the mandate for demobilization should be chosen based the considerations discussed above.

or

2) **Headquarters Unit with lead agency assigned on *ad hoc* basis**

Such a unit would not be directly involved in field demobilization exercises but would be a resource to be drawn upon by the lead agency which would be appointed on an *ad hoc* basis, by the IASC, on the recommendation of the ERC.

The Headquarters unit could be:

- i) an independent unit within the UN secretariat;
- ii) within DPKO, DHA or DPA (recently appointed focal point for post-conflict peace-building);
- iii) a UN organization (e.g. UNDP, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP);
- iv) the World Bank.

The *ad hoc* lead agency would be assigned based on which agency in that particular conflict situation is best able to meet the considerations discussed above.