



: CHAPTER 2 :

Security Strategies: CRS Option for Acceptance

: NOTES :

Security Strategies: CRS Option for Acceptance

This chapter presents a description of the three main security strategies utilized by organizations to describe their security management posture: acceptance, protection and deterrence, as well as examples and tradeoffs of implementing each strategy. The decision regarding what mix of security strategies is most appropriate for the local context is derived from a comprehensive Threat, Vulnerability, and Risk Assessment, and is determined by the country program team in consultation with the Regional Director. Benchmarking strategies with other like-minded NGOs can help to inform decisions about what is “appropriate,” as well as consultation with national staff and partners about how certain measures may impact the image of CRS. Only the decision to use armed protection must be authorized at the level of the ELT. Most of the content included in this chapter is drawn from Koenraad van Brabant’s “Operational Security Management in Violent Environments.”



Security Management Strategies

- **Acceptance:** Reduce or remove threats by increasing the local political and social consent for CRS’ presence and work in a particular context;
- **Protection:** Use protective devices and procedures to reduce the vulnerability of CRS staff and assets to a given threat (also known as “hardening the target”);
- **Deterrence:** Deter a threat by use of a counter-threat.

Most organizations use a combination of all three strategies, but each may favor one particular strategy over another. The appropriate mix of security strategies must be informed both by the organization’s identity/image, mission, but also the nature of the threats that exist in any given operational environment. The different strategies have different resource and operational implications. For example, relying on acceptance is a long-term investment in relationships, reputation, high quality programming, good training/orientation/recruitment of staff, etc., and may mean that resources are allocated not only strictly according to need, but in a way that facilitates the overall operation. Protective devices and procedures may cost more in terms of equipment, time, gas (i.e. two-car rule), and therefore can result in trade-offs both in terms of budget but also in terms of access to locations where low profile is really the best option. Deterrence strategies can also imply a large investment of resources and, in the short term, can facilitate operations. However, over the medium to long term a deterrence strategy could profoundly impact operations because of harm done to CRS image, relationships with partners, etc.



In general, CRS will exercise a preference for a strategy of acceptance, while recognizing that it may be prudent to adopt protection, and in some cases also deterrence. An example would be the case of purely criminal threats.

A. CRS Mission Statement

The CRS Mission Statement encapsulates the *why* of everything CRS does, and therefore also sets the parameters for what CRS is trying to safeguard through its security management system. Although CRS’ programming presence is slightly different across different regions and country programs, the CRS Mission statement is a good starting point for understanding who we are as an organization. CRS identity and mission drives all other decisions in terms of

¹ Koenraad Van Brabant, *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Humanitarian Practice Network, Good Practice Review 8: June 2008. Often referred to simply as “GPR 8.”

security management strategies, policies, procedures, etc. All that CRS does must reflect and adhere to the Mission Statement. CRS staff is not expected to be able to recite the CRS Mission Statement by heart but does need to clearly understand it and all that it embodies.



Catholic Relief Services carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. We are motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to cherish, preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching as we act to:

- Promote human development by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies; and
- Serve Catholics in the U.S. as they live their faith in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world.

As part of the universal mission of the Catholic Church, we work with local, national and international Catholic institutions and structures, as well as other organizations, to assist people on the basis of need, not creed, race or nationality.

B. CRS Image

The general perception and interpretation of CRS' image and actions in a specific operating environment have important influences on staff security and safety. **If there is resistance to CRS' presence and role in a given place, that resistance may eventually develop into resentment and into a potential threat.** Likewise, if CRS is perceived by criminals and bandits as a wealthy and soft target, then the agency becomes vulnerable to theft, looting and attack. CRS can approach security management through activities that promote **acceptance** of the agency by the general population, the local government, belligerent parties, etc. and/or activities that promote **protection and deterrence** such as erecting high walls and hiring armed guards. **In most CRS country programs, security is managed through a combination of acceptance and protection with heavy emphasis on the former.**

All humanitarian aid agencies have general mandates and missions. The mandates and missions of the ICRC, UN agencies and NGOs such as CRS are not identical. While at the most basic level most humanitarian agencies share the mission of saving lives, relieving suffering and, where possible, protecting livelihoods, at the program level mandates vary according to agency character and priorities. Some agencies focus on specific social groups, such as women, children, and/or refugees, while others focus on specific program sectors such as food security, health, shelter, and/or water. And others, such as CRS, are multifaceted implementing a wide variety of programs and working closely with local counterparts, including in most instances the local Catholic Church. In most situations, all humanitarian aid organizations must have the permission of the local government to establish operations within the country. In addition, CRS presence in any given country rests on the approval of the local Catholic Bishops.

The CRS field program in a specific operational environment may also be different from the focus of another CRS emergency field program. In certain contexts, for example, CRS may combine a longer-term developmental commitment with an emergency response. But in other contexts, the agency may limit itself to responding to the acute emergency, with the intention of withdrawing altogether once the situation has stabilized. CRS staff should be

able to explain the agency’s mandate, its specific mission and its specific capabilities and constraints in a given operational environment. CRS staff should also be able to explain this to a variety of actors ranging from a senior government official with whom access to a vulnerable population has been negotiated, or to a suspicious child soldier at a rebel force roadblock. Clearly the same language cannot be used in every context.

Aid agencies cannot assume that their presence will be welcomed and that they will automatically be perceived as non-partisan or impartial. They will have to make a convincing case to local populations and to belligerents that they not only have a right to be there, but that they are also worth having and worth respecting. Consent of all belligerent parties is not only a principle promoted in International Humanitarian Law, but often also makes practical sense in terms of reducing or avoiding potential threats. The purpose of negotiating the consent and acceptance of power brokers is often limited to gaining access and security for the agency property and personnel.

There are several key points to consider when assessing the image projected by CRS staff and programs:

- Our image is not only derived from the messages we consciously communicate but also from the messages that we unconsciously communicate.
- Other people may have a very different image of us than the one we have of ourselves, in ways that may affect our security.
- We need to differentiate between various categories of people that develop an image of us, so that we can develop a systematic strategy to present a desirable image to priority groups (e.g. checkpoint soldiers, government officials, community members).
- The image we portray is derived from what we say and what we do, from how we appear, and from the impact of our programs.
- More carefully managing our image and the perception that others have of us may gain greater and more widespread acceptance.
- We can cultivate acceptance to obtain access and security, and we can cultivate acceptance to elicit reciprocity from the populations on whose behalf we work.

Regardless of the international “legitimacy” of the local authorities and/or warring parties in a conflict situation, it usually is essential for CRS to have contact with all actors that have some influence over the security and safety of CRS staff and property and the population we serve. Careful analysis and thought must be given to the potential impact on CRS’ image when considering working relations with various actors, both local and international.

C. Additional Considerations: The Acceptance Strategy Relationships

In the framework of the agency’s emphasis on relationships and partnership, this approach should come naturally to CRS staff. Who we are connected to, and in formal or informal relationship with, has profound bearing on the level of acceptance of CRS in a given community or country, and therefore the safety of CRS staff. A solid network of local partners can be fundamental in providing real time information and analysis as to the security environment on a given day, and to advising CRS staff when might be a good time to visit or stay home. The communication and negotiation skills of both national and international staff should be taken into consideration when recruiting for locations where relationships are critical to staff security. Signing written or formal agreements with both groups others than the official host government will have to be considered in light of the potential costs to image/impartiality and benefits to explicit recognition and acceptance that such agreements provide.

Public Messages

Consider carefully what is said on behalf of CRS at any meeting assuming that it will be repeated publicly, leaked to the press, etc. Consider also messages conveyed to the general public and to local groups via the location and manner in which meetings are conducted. Being aware of local customs and what is considered respectful versus not respectful meeting conduct is important. Finally, make sure that all staff are appropriately prepared to answer questions from the general public related to what CRS does (and does not do), and what kind of organization CRS is. Special attention should be paid to preparing those staff with the greatest interaction with the public—drivers, administrative staff, guards, etc.—to be able to both portray CRS in an appropriate way when asked, but also to have their feelers out as they go about their daily procurement, errands, logistics tasks and be sensitive to what the image of CRS is among the people they interact with on a daily basis.

- **Implicit Messages** - Implicit messages are conveyed through appearance, behaviors, male-female interactions, etc. and speak to the need for thorough orientation of staff to local customs and norms and recruitment of staff who are sensitive and willing to be respectful of local cultural expectations in terms of dress, temperament, interactions, greetings, etc. Driving behavior sends a significant message to local populations and is an important one to work on with drivers—including speed, respect for pedestrians and bicyclists particularly where there is a great deal of dust or water sprayed on bystanders by passing vehicles.
- **Staff Composition** - The ethnic composition of CRS national staff should ideally reflect the mix that exists in the general population. National staff composition is important for staff safety and security because it affects how the organization as a whole is perceived (particularly if there are political implications to ethnic affiliation), as well as the breadth of information channels and networks accessible by CRS for security purposes. In a situation of heightened tension or conflict in the society at large, be prepared to manage a microcosm of that conflict within the organization as well as tensions are imported with the ethnic mix.
- **Programming** - Be aware how CRS identifies, designs and implements programs can also enhance or lead to a loss of acceptance, and integrate a “security lens” into program assessment approaches.

D. Additional Considerations: The Protection Strategy

Protection Measures	When?	Risks/Tradeoffs
Reducing exposure: no-go zones, curfews, reducing staff numbers, withdrawing females if they are at higher risk, limiting value of assets (cash, laptops, phones) exposed, suspending operations.	Criminal threat; threats are generally limited in time, place, route, etc.	May impair access to “needy” areas, withdrawal or suspension may impact CRS’ relationship with local partners who stay, and with local communities if/when CRS wants to resume.
Go High/Low Profile: use of CRS logo, CRS flags, or intentional decision not to use CRS logo, use rented vehicles instead of typical international aid vehicles.	High levels of acceptance contribute to a context in which the CRS logo can provide protection.	Where there are multiple threats, country management must weigh the increased risks associated with the use of logo and vehicle that is a sign of wealth and target to criminals, versus the benefit of protection it provides. CRS might enjoy a high level of acceptance in the community where projects are implemented, but remain exposed to banditry traveling the route to that community.
Strength in Numbers: policies include traveling in convoy, never traveling alone, etc. to reduce vulnerability.	Attackers will proceed with their plan when the chance of success x benefit of success equation works in their favor. If the attackers are not well trained, or unarmed, or few in number, they will think twice as long before attacking a group of individuals or vehicles—isolated individuals or isolated vehicles increases their chance of success.	Implementation is more costly in terms of vehicles/fuel required and also in terms of staff time when it is required to travel with others.
Protective Devices: use of helmets, flak jackets, blast film/walls, bomb shelters, high walls with barbed wire, barred windows, increased lighting, unarmed guards and/or watchdogs, armored vehicles, mine mats.	Some physical protection measures are low profile and the benefits so great that there are few downsides (e.g. blast film, watchdogs); in general the more common the use of protective measures (e.g. bars on windows or high walls, barbed wire), the less attention CRS will draw to itself when using the same measures.	Physical protection measures should be used only in extreme cases as they can contribute to the following risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRS staff are confused with combatants; • CRS staff are taking additional risks that they would not ordinarily take; • Give the impression to belligerents that CRS staff have inside information; • Can be expensive.

Protection Measures	When?	Risks/Tradeoffs
Protective Procedures: e.g. informing warring parties in advance of movements and perhaps seeking their explicit consent, tracking movements of staff (locator board), searching vehicles.	Tracking and searching procedures enable CRS to identify and respond to a threat more quickly should it come to pass, and may therefore reduce the impact of that threat event.	Having the “consent” of warring parties to travel in an area under one party’s control may send the message that CRS is aligned with one party to the conflict more than another, and thereby jeopardize CRS image of impartiality.
Protect Life: As a golden rule, staff should be instructed not to resist armed attackers. In all cases of threat, individuals should do first and foremost what will lead to the greatest preservation of life.	If the motive of attackers is robbery or pure carjacking, the response of CRS staff should be to signal compliance and to hand over valuables as a way to preserve their own lives. In the case of sexual assault, staff must make the on the spot determination as to whether resisting or not resisting will ultimately bring greater harm.	CRS will handover any value of assets in exchange for risking the lives of staff or would-be attackers.



NOTES

1. Armored Vehicles - Armored vehicles have been used by CRS programs in the past, but that is rare. The protection offered by armored vehicles is limited. They cannot protect against the threat of a mined road and would be useless against anti-tank mines. They are also expensive and difficult to maintain. On the positive side, they could offer some protection against gunfire.
2. Kevlar Mats - Anti-mine mats (kevlar is the material that is used for anti-mine mats) are available for installation in vehicles. While anti-mine mats may provide some protections to vehicles passengers who run over a mine, this protection is very limited and will not protect car passengers from an anti-tank mine.
3. Fragmentation Shield Jackets and Helmets - The use of this type of physical protection should be carefully considered. Likely occasions where they may be used include evacuations when staff must cross dangerous front lines or for necessary leaving of shelters in siege situations, e.g. leaving an air-raid shelter to go to the latrines, etc.

Special Note: The threat of staff utilizing such equipment being confused with soldiers should never be underestimated.

E. Additional Considerations: The Deterrence Strategy

Deterrence Measures	When?	Risks/Tradeoffs
<p>Legal, Political and Economic Sanctions: Threatening would-be attackers with political or economic sanctions is probably not a viable option in most of the operating environments where CRS operates and given CRS' profile.</p>	<p>Pressing charges in cases where the perpetrator (theft, kidnapper, rapist) is actually caught, is an example of a legal sanction.</p>	<p>Possible repercussions on the victim if the perpetrator is then released due to corruption in the justice system, or cultural norms that do not recognize rape as readily as a western legal system.</p>
<p>Suspension of Operations and/or Withdrawal: in the face of security threats, or following critical security incidents, some NGOs (sometimes as a community of NGOs) will suspend operations until conditions of security can again be guaranteed. Guarantees can be provided by local communities, parties to conflict, or through improvements in the NGO's own security management procedures.</p>	<p>Appears to work best under conditions of high levels of acceptance, and when it is adopted in a way that does not erode that acceptance (i.e. with a very clear and well-managed communications strategy). Chances of effectiveness are increased if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficiently influential portion of the population or leadership can be mobilized and effective on behalf of security guarantees; • Local community or authorities actually have influence/control over the offenders; • Suspension is not perceived as having the primary effect of punishing innocent civilians with no connection to the security environment; • Commitment to follow through on the threat of suspension, CRS is prepared to maintain the suspension until security conditions are restored; • Selective suspension and/or gradual reintroduction of services grants more room to adapt; • Solidarity among aid agencies: if one NGO is willing to step in and "fill the gap" while other NGOs have suspended operations, results will be undermined. 	<p>If the victim is arrested, at times the victim will experience beatings and abuse in prison that are disproportionately severe to the crime.</p> <p>Even with high levels of acceptance, if the local community does not fully understand the reasons for suspension, this strategy could result in mistrust and even anger at CRS if/when CRS tries to resume activities.</p>
<p>Armed Protection: The strongest form of deterrence is the use of armed protection. See Chapter 1 for CRS-specific guidelines on the decision to use armed protection.</p>	<p>CRS might consider the use of armed protection in very exceptional circumstances such as: 1) armed escort is required by the host government or UN authorities in order to access target populations; 2) as a last resort measure to protect staff implementing life-saving programs; or 3) Highly crime-ridden areas where the risks of not having armed guards seriously outweigh the risks of having armed guards. These decisions must be approved on a case by case basis by the EVP, Overseas Operations.</p>	<p>The potential use of fire-power carries with it the very real risk of loss of life, which is more valuable perhaps that the value of what is being protected. The use of firearms may have a long-term impact on CRS image, and perception of aid agencies more broadly.</p>

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