



Accountability System for the Protection of Civilians

Force and Sector Commanders' Evaluations of Subordinate Military Entities

1

SUMMARY

Military components of peace operations are regularly evaluated to monitor and improve their operational performance.¹ Systematic evaluations are conducted through the military reporting chain, from the military adviser at DPO's Office of Military Affairs (OMA) down to sub-units in the field. OMA evaluates force commanders, while force commanders and mission headquarters evaluate sub-units in the field.²

At the field level, force and sector commanders evaluate subordinate military entities to identify problems that affect their performance and recommend corrective or remedial action.³ This evaluation is done for all military units in UN peace operations, including sector, battalion, company, and independent units.⁴

Force and sector commanders conduct two types of evaluations:

1. The initial evaluation, which takes place two to three months after a unit's arrival to a mission and is a quick assessment of its manpower, equipment, and fitness for purpose; and
2. The primary, more comprehensive, more detailed evaluation, which occurs sometime during the unit's remaining nine to ten months in the mission and focuses on rectifying any issues that might affect the next units deploying to the mission.

The force commander is expected to submit a summarized and consolidated report of these evaluations to OMA at UN headquarters for its information and action, as appropriate.

These evaluations aim to avoid subjective judgements, as "impressions of performance may result from casual observation as opposed to objective evaluation." Instead, they are intended to provide force commanders and units with a "more structured, systematic

¹ UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS), "Standard Operating Procedures: Evaluation of Force Headquarters in Peacekeeping Operations," June 2016. The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) defines evaluation as "the structured process of examining activities, capabilities and performance against defined standards or criteria."

² The Mission Evaluation Policy and standard operating procedures also provide instructions for the evaluation of force headquarters, but this type of evaluation has not been done in the past few years. A new system is currently under development.

³ This factsheet examines the evaluation conducted by force and sector commanders of their subordinate military units. It does not examine the parallel process of contingent-owned equipment inspections conducted by the Department of Operational Support.

⁴ UN DPKO and OMA, "Standard Operating Procedures: Force and Sector Commander's Evaluation of Subordinate Military Entities in Peacekeeping Operations," January 2016.

approach to identifying problems (as well as strengths)" and any necessary corrective action.⁵

2

RELEVANCE TO THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Questions on POC are included in the force and sector commanders' evaluations to assess different performance areas related to community engagement, prevention and deterrence, and responses to threats. For each question, the unit's performance can be rated as "unsatisfactory," "needs improvement," "satisfactory," or "not applicable."

Each question includes sub-questions and criteria that the evaluation should take into account. For community engagement, the evaluation takes into account the ability of the unit to understand the local civilian population, the processes in place for engagement, the number of patrols that include direct engagement with local actors, the use of joint patrols, and the inclusion of information received from civilian components. For prevention and deterrence, the evaluator takes into account whether the unit has engaged with key protection actors, whether the unit has taken proactive preventive measures such as patrolling, confidence-building measures, and engagement with local communities and whether the unit has thoroughly communicated with force headquarters and civilian components. For the POC response, the evaluation considers whether units have created and rehearsed contingency plans, responded to credible alerts of imminent threats against civilians, and demonstrated a proactive posture.⁶ The questions are as follows:

1. To what extent has the unit engaged regularly with the local population and other relevant actors in its area of operations to understand the threats faced by civilians, including the specific threats faced by women and children?

In evaluating the unit, take into account:

- (1) The ability of the unit to demonstrate an understanding of the local civilian population and the nature of potential threats and vulnerabilities
- (2) The frequency of meetings held with the community, including the number of meetings with women, youth and different ethnic and religious groups.
- (3) Processes for engagement and information sharing on POC threats with local and international organizations where appropriate.
- (4) The number of patrols which included direct engagement with local populations and civilian authorities.
- (5) Inclusion of information received from civilian components (and community liaison assistants) in threat assessment and response planning.
- (6) The use of joint patrols or assessments with other mission components where possible.
- (7) The active participation of unit leadership in meetings with civilian and police mission components, sharing of information and participation in joint planning on protection.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, "Force Commander Evaluation Tool," August 2019.

2. "To what extent has the unit taken appropriate and proactive measures to prevent and deter potential threats to civilians?"

In evaluating the unit, take into account whether:

- (1) The Unit has adopted a credible deterrent posture.
- (2) The Unit has ensured a presence in areas under greatest threat to prevent and deter potential threats to civilians.
- (3) The unit has engaged with key protection actors and potential perpetrators to address security and protection concerns faced by the civilian population.
- (4) Where a potential threat to civilians has been identified, the unit has intensified its activities and taken proactive measures to prevent the threat from materializing, including through increased patrolling and presence in areas under greatest threat, advocacy and key leader engagement, and other confidence-building measures or interaction with government and non-state armed groups.
- (5) The unit has alerted force headquarters and/or civilian components of information related to any increased threat to civilians, including information that could inform civilian-led approaches/actions.
- (6) The unit has supported activities by national actors, other mission components or other civilian actors, including communities, to prevent and deter threats to civilians.

3. "To what extent does the unit respond quickly and appropriately to threats of violence against civilians which have or are likely to occur in its area of operation?"

In evaluating the unit, take into account whether:

- (1) Contingency plans to respond to threats to civilians are in place and rehearsed (including through table top and other exercises).
- (2) At the tactical level, the unit has responded quickly and appropriately to credible alerts of imminent threats of violence against civilians (whether with or without resorting to use of force).
- (3) When and where necessary, the unit has demonstrated proactive posture when faced with imminent threats of violence against civilians.

Examples

Given that evaluations are confidential, there are no direct examples of how evaluations have strengthened the military component's ability to carry out POC tasks.

3

RULES, GUIDELINES, AND METHODOLOGY

Governing rules

The standard operating procedures on the "Evaluation of Subordinate Military Entities in Peacekeeping Operations" were published in January 2016 and are currently being revised. They describe the evaluation process and provide a generic sample of an evaluation checklist, which the force commander can adjust. OMA and the Strategic Force Generation Cell have also recently developed a "Force Commander Unit

Evaluation Report Summary" questionnaire. Force commanders are required to submit a summary evaluation of each unit to OMA at UN headquarters for its information and action.⁷

As indicated by the integrated Performance and Accountability Framework recently developed by the UN, the process is currently under revision.

Process and functioning

There are two types of commanders' evaluations of military units. The first one takes place two to three months after a unit's arrival to a mission. It is a quick assessment of an evaluated unit's manpower and fitness for purpose.

The second evaluation, which is more comprehensive and detailed and is regarded as the primary evaluation, occurs during the unit's remaining nine to ten months in the mission.⁸ This evaluation aims to rectify any issues for units coming to the mission in the next deployment and to replace currently deployed units. A unit is typically deployed to a UN mission for twelve months.

Summary evaluation reports, which are sent to OMA, are required to include the following:

- The performance of the evaluated entity and progress made after any previous evaluations;
- The ability of the evaluated entity to perform the tasks required in the statement of unit requirements and the applicable UN military unit manual; and
- Recommendations for the evaluated unit's improvement or the improvement of replacement units, including a statement of additional resources required from sector, force, and mission headquarters, troop-contributing countries (TCCs), or UN headquarters.

Recommendations for improvement may include actions to improve the skills and capabilities of personnel, training, equipment, readiness, and logistical capacity or to increase manpower. The force commander can also flag systemic underperformance

⁷ See the template on the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System's website: <https://pcrs.un.org/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

⁸ Force or sector commanders schedule initial and primary evaluation visits with subordinate military commanders during the Contingent Commanders Conference. Before the agreed primary evaluation date, a pre-evaluation report is sent to force or sector commanders to highlight areas of concern and progress made since any previous evaluations. Before the force or sector commanders' initial or primary evaluation, the evaluation team leader requests key documents to be reviewed by the team. These documents include commanders' guidance and directives, standard operating procedures, and plans. When the force or sector commander's evaluation is completed, the evaluation team leader briefs the unit commander on the team's preliminary findings. Two weeks later, an evaluation report is produced and forwarded to the evaluated unit through the chain of command. The evaluated unit is then expected to develop an internal performance-improvement plan within two weeks and to share it with force or sector headquarters. The evaluated unit is required to provide the force or sector commander a quarterly update on the unit's progress.

and provide input in the “comments” field, including on suggested remedial measures. The questionnaire of the summary evaluation includes questions on the comprehension and support of the mission mandate, command and control, training and discipline, protection of civilians, sustainability, and health. In practice, evaluations are done by staff at the force or sector headquarters, but they must be endorsed and signed by the force commander.

4 ANALYSIS

Through these evaluations, force commanders are tasked with regularly and proactively evaluating the performance of the units that report to them, which provides a tool for constant accountability. The force commander's consolidated evaluation includes twenty questions, which cover a wide range of performance areas, including POC. According to a DPO official, the evaluation provides a lot of data, with room for the force commander to provide additional qualitative assessment on top of answers to the standardized questions.

Force commanders' evaluations are generally regarded as a promising tool for accountability. Since they are shared with UN headquarters, they can provide leverage to the Secretariat to raise concerns with TCCs. While there were initially some concerns that force commanders would be reluctant to frankly and openly report performance shortcomings, unit scores are compared to the mission's average and examined by headquarters, thereby controlling for force commanders who tend to give high ratings across the board.

However, some challenges persist in the systematic implementation of these evaluations. The evaluations are time-consuming, taking up to five days for each unit.⁹ Travel budgets also tend to limit the capacity of the teams to travel to field locations and see all units for the amount of time needed to thoroughly evaluate them. Moreover, more training and resources are needed to professionalize the evaluation team, including through the onboarding of professional evaluation officers who can stay in the mission for longer.


Timing

Regular process	X	Evaluations occur on a regular basis, usually in line with the deployment and rotation of units. Given that a unit is deployed for twelve months, the initial evaluation occurs two to three weeks into deployment, while the second, more comprehensive evaluation takes place nine to ten months into deployment.
Extraordinary measure after incident		

⁹ Interview with DPO official, New York, March 2020.

Actors and answerability structure

Through the force and sector commanders' evaluations, force commanders and force headquarters hold military units and TCCs accountable for carrying out mandated tasks, including POC. The Secretariat is also involved, with evaluations being sent to UN headquarters and discussed in monthly and quarterly performance meetings.

 Held accountable by	Individuals	Unit			Mission	Secretariat	Contributing countries	Security Council/ 5 th Committee	Member states	Population	Other
		Military	Police	Civilian							
Individuals											
Unit/ section/ component	Military	X			X	X					
	Police										
	Civilian										
Mission											
Secretariat											
Contributing countries		X			X	X					
Member states											
Security Council/ 5th Committee											

Scope and objective

According to the standard operating procedures, the evaluation process is “designed to help Force and Sector Commanders identify and correct problems that affect subordinate unit performance.”¹⁰

Collect best practices and lessons learned	X	Consolidated evaluation reports are sent to the DPO's Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training, who collect generic best practices and lessons learned. These are recorded without reference to a specific TCC.
Track performance	X	The main purpose of the evaluations is to track the performance of military units and identify and rectify performance-related issues in carrying out mandated tasks, including POC.
Establish facts and circumstances		
Establish responsibility		
Identify structural and systemic issues	X	The force commander can identify structural issues affecting the performance of sub-units.

Type of accountability

Force and sector commanders' evaluations are a form of performance accountability as they evaluate the performance of subordinate military units and entities and rectify any outstanding performance-related issues. As the evaluation attempts to rectify performance-related issues for the next deployment of units, it can be considered a form of organizational accountability.

Outcome

Learn	Disseminate and integrate internally	X	Findings from the evaluation report are recorded and disseminated internally to understand the lessons learned and identify issues related to performance. Furthermore, OMA consults with TCCs to discuss their contingents' shortcomings.
	Account for publicly		
Correct	Improve internal processes	X	According to the standard operating procedures, “Remedial action for the evaluated units may include the provision of training, the application of directives and, if required, a unit capability review.” ¹¹

¹⁰ UN DPKO and OMA, “Standard Operating Procedures: Force and Sector Commander's Evaluation of Subordinate Military Entities in Peacekeeping Operations.”

¹¹ Ibid.

	Inform the selection of personnel	X	The standard operating procedures do not explicitly note whether an evaluation informs the selection of personnel. However, the force commander can recommend the repatriation and replacement of units as a corrective measure.
Sanction	Recommend sanctions	X	The force commander can recommend corrective measures, including the repatriation and replacement of units.
	Establish incentives		

Independence and impartiality

The force and sector commanders' evaluations provide a meaningful opportunity to assess the performance of military units. The standard operating procedures mention "objective rather than subjective measures of success" as a guiding principle for evaluators.¹²

According to a DPO official, the frankness of the assessments varies across missions, and new force commanders can be worried about criticizing TCCs. However, the level of objectivity generally improves as UN headquarters follows up with force commanders and encourages them to provide balanced assessments.

Inclusivity

The force and sector commanders' evaluations only evaluate the performance of military units and are a military-led exercise. According to the standard operating procedures, "Cooperation between the Force Headquarters evaluation team and the evaluated unit" should be a guiding principle for the evaluation. The evaluated unit is briefed after the assessment and is actively called upon to participate in corrective measures in coordination with the headquarters. These measures are not necessarily sanctions but could also include the provision of training or other resources.

The evaluation team consists of a team leader (lieutenant colonel at the U1-U7 level), team members (officers as required), and specialists from inside or outside the mission or military component, as needed. As such, it appears the teams can be more inclusive when specialization is required. For example, questions pertaining to POC recommend that evaluators take into account whether communication and coordination with civilian components was demonstrated by the unit under evaluation.

¹² Ibid.

Transparency

“Honesty and transparency” are listed as guiding principles for the evaluation. Evaluations are confidential documents intended to improve performance and rectify issues of performance in military units. As such, these documents are not circulated publicly. According to the standard operating procedures, the force commander should submit a summarized and consolidated report of the evaluations to OMA once per quarter. While the scores are not public, relevant UN headquarters officials can have access to the scores, and integrated performance meetings with TCC representatives are held in New York to share the scores and outcomes of unit-performance evaluations.

Follow-up mechanisms

<p>Possible follow-up mechanisms</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Two weeks after the force or sector commander’s evaluation report is received, the evaluated unit develops an internal performance-improvement plan and shares it with force or sector headquarters. The evaluated unit is required to provide the force or sector commander an update on the unit’s progress quarterly.</p> <p>After the consolidated evaluation report is in the hands of OMA, the reports “will be discussed with relevant TCCs to better identify and remedy specific, TCC contingent shortfalls. At [UN headquarters], generic lessons from these reports will be entered into DPKO’s Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training database (without mentioning the specific TCC or evaluated unit) regarding best practices and lessons learned.”¹³</p> <p>At the Secretariat, there are also monthly performance meetings involving the under-secretary-general for DPO where these evaluations can be discussed and can inform decisions related to pre-deployment visits for future rotations, changes in areas of responsibility for a given unit, repatriation, or other measures.</p>
<p>Available enforcement measures</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>The consolidated evaluation report is shared with OMA at headquarters, which can then engage with TCCs to address shortcomings.</p> <p>At the Secretariat, there are also monthly performance meetings involving the under-secretary-general for DPO where these evaluations can be discussed and can inform decisions related to pre-deployment visits for future rotations, changes in areas of responsibility for a given unit, repatriation, or other measures.</p>
<p>Transmissibility to other mechanisms</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>The consolidated evaluation report is shared with OMA at headquarters, which can then engage with TCCs to address shortcomings.</p> <p>At the Secretariat, there are also monthly performance meetings involving the under-secretary-general for DPO, where these evaluations can be discussed and can inform decisions related to pre-deployment visits for future rotations, changes in areas of responsibility for a given unit, repatriation, or other measures.</p>

¹³ Ibid.