



General Secretariat of the Council Private Office of the High Representative Security Office

Vehicle & Convoy Security

Security of the vehicle, its passengers and cargo should be uppermost in the mind of the driver. Be it the streets of Brussels or through in an area devastated by a tsunami, there are always those who covet a vehicle and its contents. **Please note that vehicle traffic accidents accounted for 23 % of all fatalities in UN operations between July 2004 - October 2005**

Preparation

As with all activities, prior preparation will aid greatly in the conduct and success of a task. Most convoy tasks are relatively straightforward but this does not excuse a lack of thoughtful preparation. As with all security related matters, you should develop simple SOPs regarding the conduct of convoys and by doing so they will become naturally ingrained into the consciousness of the personnel, improving their overall security and better enabling the mission's aims to be achieved.

Serviceability

Ensure that the vehicles are correctly serviced and maintained. It should be the responsibility of the Logistician to ensure that all vehicles are serviced regularly as per manufacturers specs or more frequently because of the use / climate conditions. Ultimately, however, it is the driver of the day who is responsible for the vehicle and you must satisfy yourself that they have ensured the vehicle is ready for its intended use prior to departure.

Loading

Overloading of vehicles is a major cause of not only premature wear and failure of vehicle parts but also of accidents. All trucks and 4x4s bear decals declaring the maximum weight they can carry. This should not be exceeded. Remember that some rather clever engineers designed the vehicle so don't dispute their calculations. Also note that roof racks and their cargo count towards this total weight and that any cargo on them must be aerodynamically positioned and securely tied down. Sound obvious? Trust me it isn't to everyone!

Stationary Physical Security

The driver should ensure that all doors are locked and that nothing can be removed from the vehicle easily. Windows should never be left down far enough to allow someone to reach inside and effort should be maintained to keep curious passers by from sticking their heads in through the windows.

Planning the Route

Particularly in regions where armed banditry, or anything else threatening the roads is a concern, thorough planning of the route and alternate routes available can alleviate potential delays and help to minimize the effect of hazards. When planning, ensure you have the best up to date maps of the region you will be travelling through then take it to someone who will not pass on your travel intentions to others. And don't forget that maps can be deceiving! A red line might mean Autobahn in Germany, but in Aceh or Afghanistan it may mean a muddy track 2m wide and with often deeper potholes!

Identify the primary route then identify any practical secondary routes that can be taken to bypass any and all portions of the primary route. Ensure that all drivers are aware of these secondary routes and know how to identify them on the ground. If time and resources permit a thorough reconnaissance of all potential routes should be made.

Communications

All vehicles must be equipped with radio communications. Remember that VHF is "line of sight" so it will not work well in hilly terrain although it remains the best option for vehicles travelling in a convoy. HF, such as provided by CODAN radios, is the option for vehicles distant from the home base and at least one convoy vehicle should be so equipped according to Minimum Security Operating Standards. If there are a limited number of radios to go around then they should be distributed first to the convoy leader, then the last vehicle then the centre vehicle and so on. For the benefit of those vehicles that do not have radios, a basic set of signals should be developed and practiced before departure. These can be hand signals, flashing lights (headlights/tail lights/torch) or using flags. The signals should be very basic and very limited and one of them should definitely be "DANGER".

Briefing

Prior to departure, the convoy leader should fully brief everyone who is travelling with the convoy. The briefing should include the terrain and routes, expected weather and potential threats to security. Signals should be rehearsed and SOPs taught / revised. Try to envisage everything that can go wrong or affect the conduct of the convoy. Breakdowns, flooded rivers, ambush, lunch breaks etc and come up with a brief plan on what to do in such situations. It is best if each mini-plan is as similar (if not identical) to the other mini-plans so that your drivers are confident they know what to do when situations arise.

Conduct

Having now fully prepared the vehicles and fully briefed the drivers you are ready to go and cruise along admiring the wildlife and marvelling at the alien terrain. Wrong! Convoys hardly ever go completely right. Managing a line of vehicles, most of them without radios (and your not being able to speak the language of the drivers anyway) through all sorts of

hazards and obstacles may turn out to be a multi-tasking nightmare. Much worse if you think someone might want to take a shot at you.

Try to visualise your convoy as a knotted piece of string. Each knot should be a standard distance apart and that is how your convoy should look from the air. Keeping the string taut and moving is your job. Be flexible and be alert and try not to lose your cool, it won't impress the locals at all!

Speed

Never drive faster than your drivers and your own abilities, the capabilities of the vehicles (taking into account loaded weights, condition of tyres/brakes etc) or the conditions road surface and weather allow. Handling a Ford Escort on the Brussels Ring is quite different to making good time in a Landcruiser along a difficult route. When conducting a convoy, remember to set a pace that allows the convoy to stay together.

Crossing a stream will slow down each and every vehicle so, until the last vehicle reports that it is clear of the obstacle, the convoy leader must maintain that same slow crawling pace.

Spacing

Vehicles should never stop so close to another vehicle that they cannot pull out and pass it in an emergency. When halted, the distance between vehicles will very much depend on the terrain and perceived security risk and the resources available to protect the vehicles. On the move, again, the terrain and perceived security risk will determine the spacing. Each truck should keep visual contact with the vehicle ahead, although this can be difficult in dusty conditions. (Now, how do you avoid collisions?) Keep in mind that points along the route that are natural bottlenecks or obstacles and cause vehicles to close up to one another are the perfect ambush sites. In insecure environments it is vital to impress upon your drivers that they must stop well back and wait for the vehicle in front to clear the obstacle before they approach it.

Ambush

Should one or more of your vehicles come under fire then the reaction of the drivers must be instinctive. Those caught in the line of fire should "push the peddle to the metal" and attempt to break the land speed record getting out of danger. Forget all previous notes about loads and speeds - bullets do more than hurt! The vehicles ahead, usually including the Convoy Leader, should identify a safe place to stop together and await any vehicles that make it through the ambush. Vehicles behind the ambush site should stop and move back to the last vehicle. In order to complete their journey they will now have to use one of those alternate routes you carefully planned for. **NO ATTEMPT SHOULD BE MADE TO GO BACK.** This only has the potential to add to the casualties. Once the shooting has stopped doesn't mean it is safe. It will not be safe until the hostile forces have been defeated or have withdrawn and that may be some time if they are looting your vehicles.

Armed Escorts

You will be in a position to receive the assistance of an armed escort. The responsibility for the conduct of the convoy is part of the Escort Commander role. It is now his job to get you through and, if someone has decided you need such an escort, it is advisable you listen very closely and do as he says. A Convoy Escort is no guarantee that your vehicles will not be attacked. If a hostile force wants to destroy one or more of your vehicles, they will!

All the escort can do is return fire and provide a deterrent against future attacks. Do not relax on such journeys, remain vigilant as the threat against you is obviously at its highest.