

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the request of Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA) by Humanitarian Actors in South Sudan

Purpose

1. The aim of this SOP is to outline the process for the request of MCDA, including force protection. It complements the *Guidelines for coordination between Humanitarian Actors and UNMISS* which outline which provides definitions and standards for the use of MCDA for humanitarian purposes.

MCDA Form

2. All MCDA requests, including armed escorts, security at sites and/or logistical support, necessitate the completion of the MCDA form, updated in April 2022. It is available from OCHA.

Process for approval

3. Requesting organization ensures the request meets the criteria laid out in the *Guidelines for coordination between Humanitarian Actors and UNMISS*, including:
 - *Humanitarian Need and Programme Criticality: The level of humanitarian need is such that the lack of humanitarian action would lead to unacceptable human suffering, yet the transport of essential personnel and relief supplies cannot be undertaken without the use of armed escorts;*
 - *Responsible Authorities: State authorities or local non-State actors are unable or unwilling to permit the movement of humanitarian supplies or personnel without the use of armed escorts.*
 - *Safety and Security: The armed escorts utilized provide a credible deterrent necessary to enhance the safety of humanitarian personnel and capacity to provide assistance to the beneficiaries without compromising their security or that of the affected people.*
 - *Sustainability: The use of an armed escort will not irreversibly compromise the humanitarian operating environment or the longer-term capacity of the organization(s) to safely and effectively operate in the future. The humanitarian agency in question must have conducted a thorough stakeholder analysis to determine the potential consequences of the using an armed escort and must put in place all possible mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of negative consequences.*
4. Requesting organization ensures appropriate security measures are in place, including, as appropriate, consulting UNDSS Force Protection/Road Risk map and ASMT recommendation.
5. Requesting organization fills out the MCDA form.
6. Request for MCDA sent to OCHA at least 10 working days before the planned date, as per UNMISS procedure. Emergency requests may be considered within a shorter time frame.

The filled-out MCDA request form sent to OCHA to the following addresses:

Adebanjo Perez, CMCoord Officer: adegbolagun@un.org

Alhadi Albaridi, Access Officer: albaridi@un.org

With Matthew Mpitapita (mpitapita@un.org) and Takesure Mugari (mugari@un.org) in copy.

7. OCHA acknowledges receipt of the request by email.
8. OCHA processes the request on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator: (i) ensuring that the request meets the criteria set out in the *Guidelines for coordination between Humanitarian Actors and UNMISS*, and that the form is filled out correctly.

OCHA sends the form to UNMISS U9 (CIMIC) with the requesting organization in copy.

9. UNMISS U9 acknowledges receipt of the request by email, with the requesting organization in copy.

UNMISS U9 processes the request and sends it to U3 review and action.

10. UNMISS U9 communicates the approval to OCHA with the requesting organization in copy. The email will include information about the focal point to be contacted about the request.
11. Any change to the initial request – e.g. dates, locations, vehicles, etc. – needs to be communicated by the requesting organization, an email outlining the proposed changes is sent by the requesting organization to UNMISS U9 with OCHA in copy.
12. In case of humanitarian convoys with Force Protection, convoys must remain exclusively humanitarian and armed personnel should remain in separate vehicles. The humanitarian nature of the convoys excludes the participation UNMISS civilian elements, or joining up with UNMISS movement convoy (MOVCON).

Other considerations

13. In case of an escalated threat situation where the situation may require UNMISS Force intervention, the MCDA process is not appropriate. As per *Guidelines for coordination between Humanitarian Actors and UNMISS*, humanitarian agency should inform OCHA, UNDSS, UNPOL and the UNMISS Head of Field Office, as applicable (see Guidelines Annex 4: Integrated Response Mechanism flow chart). Humanitarians travel in UNMISS vehicles with armed units (trucks and Armored Personnel Carriers) as an extreme last resort.
14. Force Protection for airfield can be granted for no longer than three months. A new application, with a recommendation from UNDSS and ASMT, needs to be submitted at that time.

Relevant Guidance

- Guidelines for Coordination between Humanitarian Actors and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (2013, updated February 2022).
- Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies – “MCDA Guidelines” - Rev. 1 (January 2006).
- IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys (2013)