



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY  
OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

# OSAC

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## GUIDELINES FOR A PERSONNEL RECOVERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

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# OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION SUPPORT CENTER*

## EVERY DAY AROUND THE GLOBE, OSAC CONSTITUENTS FACE A VARIETY OF THREATS TO THEIR ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONNEL ON THE GROUND.

An isolating or a kidnapping incident of an employee can be one of the most devastating and sensitive that an organization can face. Personnel recovery crises can range from an employee with a flat tire in the middle of the desert to a group of employees abducted by a terrorist organization and held for months. These types of crises are usually delicate and fast-moving, and as such require an immediate response from your organization as a whole.

Thus, it is critical to have a clear, flexible, and practiced personnel recovery response plan. An organization's response in the first few hours or days can determine the outcome of the incident. Many OSAC constituents already have plans in place, such as activating insurance or security providers in a personnel recovery situation or standing up an in-house recovery team. No matter how your organization approaches such an event, there will be aspects of personnel recovery that your organization will have to deal with directly, such as talking to the victims' families, dealing with the media, or ensuring the victim receives proper treatment upon return.

This publication is not intended to be a blueprint for a personnel recovery plan. Rather, it is a series of basic suggestions that OSAC constituents should consider when reviewing their current personnel recovery plans, or when developing new ones.

# ASSESS THE POTENTIAL FOR ISOLATION

## 1. ASSESS THE THREAT TO PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD POSED BY:

- A.** Adversaries: Including terrorist groups, protestors, civil unrest, or anyone who would target or affect your operations.
- B.** Environmental Factors: Fault lines, hurricane season, typhoons.
- C.** Communication Issues: Satellite phone reception, ability of the government to control the internet, communication network availability.
- D.** Human Errors: Everyone makes mistakes, something as simple as getting lost can become an isolating incident.

## 2. IMPLEMENT POLICIES TO MITIGATE THE THREAT TO PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD:

- A.** Adversaries: Have travel policies and restrictions with appropriate physical security measures. Having staff check in, when they travel to remote locations is an important procedure.
- B.** Environmental Factors: Restrict seasonal travel, make sure staff have survival equipment such as additional water and clothing; draft and rehearse evacuation plans; have alternate modes of transportation available for evacuations (land, air, sea).
- C.** Communication Issues: Upgrade and maintain your equipment; maintain redundant communication mechanisms.
- D.** Human Errors: Provide safe travel training to all personnel. Require advanced training for travelers to and within high threat regions.



### **3. ASSESS THE CAPABILITIES TO DEAL WITH A PERSONNEL RECOVERY EVENT BY:**

- A.** The Host Nation: Does the host country have the infrastructure to deal with some type of personnel recovery event? Do they have a search and rescue capability with trained personnel to locate and recover missing persons?
- B.** Your organization: What resources will you activate when you have a personnel recovery event (i.e. Task Force or Monitoring Center)?
- C.** The U.S. Government: Although all U.S. missions abroad have varying capabilities, the Regional Security Officer (RSO) at an embassy or a consulate is charged with ensuring all appropriate resources are dedicated to the recovery of a U.S. citizen.
- D.** Diplomatic Missions: What kinds of services will the embassies of your third-country nationals provide?

# ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RESOURCES

## **1. LIST ROLES FOR SECURITY, HUMAN RESOURCES, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND OTHER HEADQUARTERS ENTITIES, AS WELL AS FIELD OFFICES IN THE EVENT OF ISOLATION OR KIDNAPPING:**

- A.** Who is charged with finding a missing person?  
Define the roles for each office. For example, human resources may be charged with communicating with the family to see if they have heard from the victim. The field office may make inquiries to the local hospitals and morgues.
- B.** If your field office is tasked with recovering an isolated person, what specific roles will they have?
- C.** If your security office at headquarters will take the lead on a kidnapping situation, make sure you also have members from the field office involved. Be cautious of your personnel working long hours, as productivity and accuracy will decline.
- D.** If your organization is faced with a hostage taking situation, who will be charged with negotiating with the captors, talking to the family, and dealing with the media?



## **2. WHAT ASSISTANCE CAN BE PROVIDED FROM THE U.S. MISSION DURING A PERSONNEL RECOVERY EVENT?**

- A.** “Welfare and Whereabouts” check can be carried out by Consular officials.
- B.** RSOs may be able to assist via local contacts, such as local police or host nation.
- C.** RSOs are charged with managing personnel recovery events within an embassy. There are a variety of U.S. government resources available within U.S. Missions such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Defense.
- D.** The Embassy can also provide a valuable network for information sharing through your local OSAC Country Council. It is important to establish your networks prior to a personnel recovery event.

# REPORTING AND ASSESSING A PERSONNEL RECOVERY SITUATION

## **1. COLLECT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT ISOLATED, KIDNAPPED, OR DETAINED PERSONNEL:**

- A.** Name
- B.** Date of birth
- C.** Citizenship/passport information
- D.** Next of kin
- E.** Medical history and medications
- F.** Telephone numbers, carrier, SIM number
- G.** Other

## **2. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING BEFORE TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION:**

- A.** If it is a hostage situation, what threats or demands have the captors made?
- B.** Do you need to establish extra security measures in country or organization wide? Special communications arrangements? Supplemental personnel?
- C.** What company resources will be deployed to the location of the incident?
- D.** Will you provide assistance to the family?



### **3. KNOW THE FOLLOWING PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF PERSONNEL RECOVERY:**

- A.** U.S. Embassy: Call the emergency phone number listed on every embassy or consulate website. If the victim is not a U.S. Citizen, also notify their appropriate diplomatic mission.
- B.** Host nation: If appropriate, report the event to local authorities. This is likely something the RSO can assist with.
- C.** Your own organization: Report to all appropriate parties which may include your executive office, legal, human resources, security, family members of the victim, etc.
- D.** OSAC: To report an event during business hours, please contact the appropriate Research and Information Support Center (RISC) staff member. For after-hours emergencies, please call the OSAC Emergency Duty phone at 202-309-5056.

### **4. IF A MEMBER OF YOUR STAFF IS BEING HELD HOSTAGE, DETERMINE THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THE CAPTORS:**

- A.** Motivations: Are they tied to a political movement or are they isolated criminal actors? What are their goals and philosophies?
- B.** History: If they have taken hostages in the past, how have those situations played out? What were their tactics?
- C.** Capabilities: How much money and what type of weapons does the group have? With which other groups are they involved?
- D.** Affiliations: Are there organizations or individuals that might be pressure points for the group? Local political parties, state supporters, religious groups, ideological sympathizers, or international organizations?

# REPORTING AND ASSESSING A PERSONNEL RECOVERY SITUATION

(CONTINUED)

## 5. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IN PLANNING YOUR PERSONNEL RECOVERY:

- A.** Victim support: If it is at all possible, support the victim by sending medication, clothes, and other humanizing items.
- B.** Support to the victim's family: Who will keep them up-to-date on the situation? Many times it is helpful to have one point of contact for the family. Will you provide some type of counseling?
- C.** Negotiation strategy: In the case of a hostage situation, how will you negotiate with the captors during this event?
- D.** Public Affairs strategy: What will your message be to the public? If you are not reporting your incident to anyone outside of the organization, what are you doing to keep the information protected? If you are reporting it, how will you address the issue to the media? This will likely involve de-conflicting information that has been released by different parties.
- E.** Insurance provider communication: Decide how or who will contact the insurance provider.
- F.** Evaluate established security guidelines: Do your other employees in-country need to take extra precautions?

# POST RECOVERY STEPS

## **1. WHAT STEPS WILL YOUR ORGANIZATION TAKE TO SUPPORT YOUR EMPLOYEE UPON THEIR RETURN?**

- A.** Counseling: The victim and the family may need some type of counseling.
- B.** Work: If the employee will be returning to work, ensure they have enough time to decompress.
- C.** Salary: Will you continue to pay/grant paid leave to an employee while they are in isolation, and then after the return?

## **2. IF A MEMBER OF YOUR STAFF IS NOT RECOVERED, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:**

- A.** If the staff member is deceased, the appropriate diplomatic mission should assist in repatriation efforts.
- B.** What plans do you have in place to support a long-term hostage situation? Will you continue to be able to provide support, monetary or otherwise, to the family of the victim?

## **3. AFTER AN EVENT, IDENTIFY GAPS IN YOUR PERSONNEL RECOVERY PLAN:**

- A.** Decide what was successful and what was not.
- B.** Evaluate the amount and type of training provided to your staff, including how to manage a personnel recovery situation, or what to do if you are the victim of a hostage situation.
- C.** Decide which resources were your most valuable and strengthen the networks that did not provide any support.



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