

# Lesson 1.2
# The Impact of MDMH on Uniformed Operations and Force Protection

# Learning Outcomes

- Describe how MDMH can undermine the legitimacy and credibility of UN missions and incite violence against peacekeepers.
- Describe the psychological and emotional effects that MDMH can have on individuals and communities, and the consequences of these efforts for missions.

# Lesson Contents

- The rise of MDMH against UN peacekeepers.
- MDMH psychological and emotional effects on individuals and communities.
- The impact of MDMH on tactical activity.
- The challenges of differentiating fact from fiction.

‘**Information integrity is compromised in several peacekeeping settings,** as the advent of digital media combined with weak media sectors has enabled **misinformation, disinformation and hate speech** to flourish in many parts of the world, which poses a serious risk of armed violence and **threatens the safety and security of peacekeepers**.’

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, United Nations Secretary-General

# The Rise of MDMH against UN Peacekeepers

- MDMH about UN peacekeepers is not new. But is more prolific due to:
  - The scale at which MDMH is being produced.
  - The speed at which it spreads.
  - The audience it reaches.
- Common claims:
  - Peacekeeping missions are pillaging natural resources
  - Peacekeepers are supplying weapons to armed groups.
- MDMH can take various forms.

# Psychological and Emotional Effects of MDMH on Individuals and Communities

- **Fear**: False narratives can evoke a sense of fear.
- **Anger**: Misdirected anger can escalate conflicts.
- **Mistrust**: Mistrust can affect civilian collaboration with UN forces.
- **Confusion**: Confusion can leave communities vulnerable to manipulation.

# MDMH Impact on Peacekeeping

- 48% of 261 peacekeepers surveyed in April 2023 said that mis/disinformation had critically or severely impeded mandate implementation.
- 61% of respondents said that mis- and disinformation had a critical or severe impact on their personal safety and security, and that
- 61% stated that MDMH had a critical or severe effected on the mission's ability to implement its mandate.

UN DPO survey: 2023

# MDMH Impact on Peacekeeping (2)

**MINUSCO, Deputy Force Commander**

"False accusations against the Mission and targeting of staff members on ethnic basis affects the safety and security of the Mission and its operations."

**MONUSCO, Civil Affairs**

Locals think the military support the armed groups by supplying them with ammunition.

# Discussion

**How could the disinformation below impact military and police unit operations and force protection?**

‘locals are saying that MONUSCO is providing ammunition to armed groups’

# The Potential Impact of MDMH on the Mission

- Undermines mission credibility and legitimacy.
- Weakens trust and confidence in the mission.
- Makes harmful narratives stronger.
- Destabilises the operating environment.



# The Potential Impact of MDMH on Tactical Activity

- Bases and personnel at risk of protest and attack.
- Affects information collection and decision making.
- Disrupts freedom of movement.



# Case study Nov 2023: MDMH Destabilising the Operating Environment

- Social media channels called for a mobilisation to demand MINUSMA's departure, describing the Mission as an 'imminent threat" to Mali.
- Online discussions accused the Mission of leaving its camps and military equipment in the hands of the "terrorists".
- The UN was accused of collaborating with armed factions and labeled MINUSMA as a mission aimed at destabilising Mali.






# The Impact of MDMH on Individuals

- Information overload.
- Speed of information and publication.
- Digital technology to support false narratives.
- Confirmation bias.
- Lack of media literacy.
- Satire or parody.



# Take Aways

- MDMH can undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the mission.
- MDMH can pose a threat to military and police operations.
- MDMH can incite violence against UN military and police personnel and premises.
- MDMH makes it hard to differentiate between fact and fiction.