



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 effect on the mission's ability to implement its mandate.

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.