



CORRUPTION AND MILITARY OPERATIONS: A NOTE FOR COMMANDERS

Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance

Transparency International (TI) is the world's leading non-governmental anti-corruption organisation, addressing corruption and corruption risk in its many forms through a network of more than 100 national chapters worldwide.

Transparency International Defence and Security (TI-DS) works to reduce corruption in defence and security worldwide.

© 2019 Transparency International. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in parts is permitted, providing that full credit is given to Transparency International and provided that any such reproduction, in whole or in parts, is not sold or incorporated in works that are sold. Written permission must be sought from Transparency International if any such reproduction would adapt or modify the original content.

With thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands for its generous support. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Transparency International Defence & Security and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

Published June 2019.

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this report. All information was believed to be correct as of June 2019. Nevertheless, Transparency International cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts.

CORRUPTION AND MILITARY OPERATIONS: A NOTE FOR COMMANDERS

Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance

CONTENTS

Corruption and conflict: why commanders need to take note	1
What does corruption look like?	2
Mitigating the impact of corruption: the commander's role	3
Planning for Anti-Corruption	4
Mission Planning	4
Mission Execution	6
Transition & Draw-Down	6
Conclusion: Next Steps	7
Further Reading	8

CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT: WHY COMMANDERS NEED TO TAKE NOTE

Corruption and conflict are bedfellows and their coexistence feeds a vicious circle of violence and instability. Between 2008 and 2016, corruption fuelled violent incidents in more than 50 countries, and contributed to large-scale conflicts in Nigeria, Yemen, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. At its worst, corruption wastes resources, impedes economic development, facilitates terrorist and insurgent operations, contributes to arms proliferation, and damages the legitimacy and effectiveness of government institutions, making it more difficult for them to respond to insecurity. It has undermined recent international interventions, including the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and made defence capacity building difficult in some cases and futile in others.

Given that corruption and conflict go hand in hand, future interventions in fragile and conflict states will need to contend, as they have in the past, with corrupt practices that can undermine the purpose of the mission, perpetuate insecurity, and cause misery for whole societies. They will face situations where state institutions, including the armed forces and defence ministries, have been captured by corrupt and criminal networks. They will need to understand the consequences that corruption can have for the mission and assess the role that the mission itself can play either in mitigating or exacerbating corruption risks.

Armed forces on the ground can model and support integrity-based behaviour and support those who push for integrity and good governance. However, their presence also comes with the influx of resources such as sustainment funds and political support for host nation actors, which can be used to augment the influence of corrupt networks that can benefit from conflict and undermine peace. It is therefore imperative that armed forces are prepared to recognise and mitigate the extent, severity and impact of corrupt practices in operational theatres, to mitigate corruption risks in their own activities, and to support wider anti-corruption measures.

Whether corruption is allowed to undermine mission goals depends to a large extent on the commander's awareness of its impact, and on his or her ability to prioritise and resource the efforts to mitigate it.

From a military perspective, corruption has four principal consequences:

- **Undermines the Desired End State.** Corruption diminishes the ability of international efforts, including military operations and security assistance, to achieve sustainable security and governance-related goals. Since it reduces the ability of many states to respond adequately to insecurity, it also makes exit strategies based on handing over to competent host nation partners more difficult to achieve.
- **Promotes Instability.** As corruption frustrates improvements in governance and security, it also contributes to instability and widespread societal grievances. Theft of public money by corrupt politicians and officials locks countries into cycles of low economic growth and endangers human security. As a result, resentment and disillusionment grow, especially among the poor and the young.
- **Wastes Resources and Effort.** Inflated funding requirements caused by corruption along the supply chain increase mission costs. When diverted by malign actors, these funds also have the potential to directly aid adversaries: in effect, the mission funds its own failure.
- **Damages Mission Credibility.** Where a mission describing itself as a 'force for good' either implicitly accepts or is an unwitting accomplice to corrupt practices, its credibility within the host nation and on the international stage will be undermined.

Corruption and insecurity: the global picture

- The UN estimates the combined loss to developing countries from corruption, theft and tax evasion at about \$1.26 trillion per annum, more than the entire annual international aid budget.
- Seven of the ten lowest-scoring countries in the 2016 TI Corruption Perceptions Index were among the ten least peaceful countries in the 2017 Global Peace Index.
- The fall of Mosul in Iraq to ISIS in 2014 is directly attributable to the effects of corruption on the capacity, cohesion and capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces.
- Systematic corruption undermined Kenya's security infrastructure and facilitated the attack on the Westgate Mall in 2013.
- Corruption in Afghanistan was a major factor contributing to increased insecurity, widespread grievances, hollowed-out state institutions and extremist recruitment. By relying on and, in return, supporting Afghan warlords, international forces enabled the growth of corrupt networks and became tarnished by association.

What does corruption look like?

Transparency International (TI) defines corruption as the 'abuse of entrusted power for private gain'. This definition includes an element of subversion, or the illegitimate use of resources meant for a particular purpose. It involves a benefit that is illegitimately obtained, and harm caused to those deprived of a benefit they were entitled to. This makes corruption divisive, wasteful, and dangerous.

Corruption usually (though not exclusively) falls into three broad categories:

- **Favouritism:** Favours a particular individual, group or policy for reasons of personal bias or illicit gain. Favouritism can include nepotism, sectarianism and partisanship.
- **Bribery and facilitation payments:** Accepting and demanding inducements to act contrary to one's duties (bribery) or, conversely, to perform one's duties (facilitation payments). This type of corruption can also involve extortion.
- **Fraud:** Ranging from diversion and embezzlement of funds and resources to electoral fraud, this type of corruption incorporates theft of public resources as well as shaping of processes - for example tenders - to benefit particular individuals or groups.

Corruption exists at three levels:

- **Petty:** low-level bribery and influence peddling.
- **Grand:** affecting institutional processes such as procurement.
- **Kleptocracy and state capture:** the repurposing of significant parts of the state apparatus – or even its entirety – for personal or group enrichment. This type of corruption can subvert state operations, steal elections, and divert financial resources.

In some cases, these levels can operate independently, but more frequently they are vertically integrated. For example, extortion and bribery at the lower level can be linked to higher-level officials demanding bribes for appointments to particular positions. Low-level bribery then becomes a means to gain the funds necessary to buy a higher-level job. Therefore, it is useful to look at all three levels and the links between them when designing strategic, operational and tactical responses.

It is frequently said that corruption is a cultural phenomenon, more acceptable in some countries than in others due to dominant values and ways of living and doing business. In some cases, commanders will indeed see some variation in how acceptable practices such as patronage are in different contexts. But overall, corruption is very rarely accepted as the right thing to do, or a preferable way of running a country. Even if corrupt practices are prevalent, this should not be taken as proof that they are accepted. Individuals locked in corrupt systems could well not have a choice and the mission's presence, if used to model integrity and support those fighting corruption, could provide an alternative.

MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION: THE COMMANDER'S ROLE

International interventions can either mitigate or exacerbate the impact of corruption through the injection of resources and the tacit, or indeed overt, support of political actors. If corruption is a problem in the mission's own ranks, it will not only waste mission resources, but also provide further opportunities for corrupt actors within the host nation.

As commanders set the tone from the top, their awareness of and approach to corruption risks will shape the mission's behaviour and will be a key factor in whether corruption is addressed or not. In order to effectively direct anti-corruption work, commanders need to:

Understand

As the commander, you must have a clear picture of the threat posed by corruption to your mission. This should be a central concern. Corrupt local politicians, officials, military personnel, police officers and contractors, along with the illegal activities of organised crime groups, warlords and their militias, can threaten the successful outcome of your mission just as surely as hostile enemy acts. These corrupt actors will do this by diverting funds from their intended purposes, by hollowing out host nation security and governance structures, and, ultimately, by harming local populations.

Protect

Your own actions can also have unintended consequences. The presence of international forces is both a risk and an opportunity. Missions can support agents of change and model integrity; however, tacit or overt support for malign actors who undermine peace processes and the injection of substantial resources can provide fodder for corrupt networks.

Mission personnel themselves are also not immune from corruption, which can waste resources, subvert mission goals, and present further opportunities to corrupt networks in the host nation. Commanders need to understand the risks within the mission as well as in the area of operations, and to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place.

Support and cooperate

In most cases, armed forces will not be at the forefront of anti-corruption activities or governance reforms, and there will be a number of stakeholders in theatre who have an interest in limiting corruption. Host nation government departments, civilian agencies of troop-contributing countries, NGOs, and international institutions can all be consulted for support or advice. Thought should be given to including them in planning where possible, and regular co-ordination and de-confliction meetings should be part of the battle rhythm.

However, as key actors on the ground, the armed forces should ensure that they do not exacerbate the situation – at the very least, missions should aim to do no harm – and that they stand ready to analyse the situation and provide support as appropriate. In situations where the predominance of a military presence and/or the security conditions warrant it, the military might need to consider a leadership role.

PLANNING FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION

In order to mitigate the potential effects of corruption on the mission, commanders should consider initiating the following processes:

Mission Planning

J1/Internal Audit/Military Police

Task with ensuring that clear anti-corruption guidelines and reporting channels are established and disseminated to mission personnel.

- **Anti-corruption standards and procedures:** guidance for mission personnel on what constitutes corruption and the risks corrupt practices pose;
- **Whistleblowing and reporting channels:** establish ways of reporting corruption safely and anonymously if desired, and ensure that procedures for investigating complaints are in place. Ideally these reporting channels (phone lines, e-mails, or in-person reports) should be available to mission personnel and external actors.

J2

Task with producing a Corruption Threat Assessment as part of the overall Intelligence Estimate to:

- **Identify networks and actors** who pose a threat, and identify interfaces on the J1-9 spectrum of activity. This should apply not only to Red, but also to Blue, Green and White actors (adversaries, supporters, neutral forces & civilian actors).
- **Identify risks, indicators and warnings** that form the basis for a corruption risk management strategy and force generation requests.
- **Assess the perceptions of corruption** among the population, including the institutions and individuals seen as perpetrators of corruption. Include friendly and neutral forces in this assessment and in particular, ascertain whether host nation defence and security forces are associated with corrupt practices.

J5

Task with using the Corruption Threat Assessment to develop a Corruption Risk Matrix. This should inform an Anti-Corruption Annex to the Operation Order, operational plans can then remain as a live document to track risks and mitigations. The Annex should contain direction to all units and other delegated authorities that includes guidance on:

- **Command arrangements:** requirements for command oversight and liaison at the appropriate level.
- **Security force assistance:** identification of corruption risks in partner forces and guidance on appropriate mitigation measures.
- **Engagement with host nation stakeholders:** understanding the need for engaging with host nation stakeholders as well as the risks related to offering and accepting political and material support from these stakeholders.

5 Corruption and Military Operations - A Note for Commanders

J4 and J8

Task sustainment and finance SMEs with planning for establishment of financial oversight mechanisms and due diligence on contracting activities. This should include considerations of:

- **Absorption rate:** with support from J2 and J9, the sustainment and contracting strategy should be explicitly adjusted to the host nation's absorptive capacity, without flooding the local markets with money and resources that can easily be co-opted by corrupt and criminal networks.
- **Planning:** sustainment and finance personnel should be included in planning so that planners can understand what sustainment can and cannot deliver. They might also be able to advise on the best external agencies to perform additional tasks, for example oversight.
- **Sustainment and contracting:** due diligence, financial processes and project oversight mechanisms required to mitigate corruption risks.
- **Financial force protection:** experts on financial flows will be key in ensuring that the force has put in place adequate measures to mitigate corruption risks.
- **Mentoring:** international experts can provide support to host nation institutions where it does not compromise their primary remit.

J7

Task with collecting lessons learned and feeding them into collective training.

- **Identifying lessons learned:** ensure that corruption risk analysis and results of mitigations implemented are captured as part of lessons learned that underpin training.
- **Designing pre-deployment training:** feeding into pre-deployment briefings and exercises to ensure corruption risks and mitigations adopted are known to incoming troops.

J9

Task with identifying and establishing relationships with civilian actors who work on corruption issues and could provide assistance.

Cross-Cutting

Task each of the J1-9 staff divisions with actively monitoring their corruption threats using individual Risk Matrices, and to report changes to J2.

Comprehensive planning requires time and resources, and both can be lacking if the mission in question is a response to a fast-moving crisis. However, these guidelines can also be applied to horizon scanning and crisis monitoring in peacetime which would create a repository of relevant information accessible at short notice. Including corruption in everyday military activity can help adequately prepare military forces for the requirements of unexpected situations that need a quick reaction.

Mission Execution

While ensuring that there are effective oversight and supervision mechanisms based on the mission's own corruption risk strategy, commanders should also consider:

- Offering anti-corruption training to both your own and host nation forces;
- Adopting policies to increase transparency in mission activities (such as sustainment) and among host nation partners;
- Ensuring continuity of information to mitigate the impact of military rotations in theatre;
- Monitoring indicators and warnings of corrupt practices as part of the overall operational assessment.

Transition & Draw-Down

As the mission draws down, corruption risks typically take a back seat to other priorities. However, the vacuum that a mission's departure can create, as well as the tangible resources that international forces frequently leave behind – from IT equipment to weapons – could be opportunities for corrupt networks. Commanders should consider:

- Assessing corruption risks in the transition phase, focusing on potential opportunities that come with the power vacuum;
- Putting in place a monitoring regime for asset disposal.

CONCLUSION: NEXT STEPS

The security and development communities must recognise that fighting corruption is a priority for both if peace and security are to take hold the conditions for development. Commanders of the intervening military forces have a critical role to play in ensuring that this is achieved. It is therefore crucial that commanders and their staff understand the role of corruption as a driver of conflict, are able to recognise and assess corruption risks affecting the mission, and can put in place appropriate mitigation measures.

For best preparedness, military headquarters should incorporate corruption into their everyday processes and activities, including standard operating procedures and exercises. This will help military personnel recognise corruption when they see it, assess its potential consequences, and work out what they can do to counter it. Corruption should also be incorporated into pre-deployment training, where risks specific to the area of operations can be more thoroughly discussed.

FURTHER READING

This document is part of a larger body of work on analysing and mitigating corruption risks in interventions with a military component. It signposts the key issues and actions that are likely to require a military commander's involvement. For more detail on specific corruption pathways, mitigation measures, and military planning processes, please consult the Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance website.

The impact of corruption on mission success has now been recognised by NATO, the UK Armed Forces, and US agencies, all of which have begun to adopt policies that could mitigate its impact. The list below brings together the key analytical and policy documents that can help commanders understand and mitigate corruption risks.

Additional reading on corruption risks and mitigation measures is available in the respective sections of the TI Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance.

- Transparency International – Defence and Security, *The Fifth Column: Understanding the Relationship between Corruption and Conflict*, 2017
- Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, 2016
- Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, 2017
- Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015
- *UK Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-2022*
- *NATO Building Integrity Policy*
- UK Joint Doctrine Publication 5 (JDP 05), *Shaping a Stable World: The Military Contribution*, 2016

