And when the military leave, as will be the case in Afghanistan in 2014, a political mission can be left behind without effective security.

- Political missions can be protected by stand-alone international military or security forces. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is guarded by a contingent of Fijian troops. The Security Council has asked the AU to provide a dedicated guard unit for UN staff in Somalia, and plans were made for military protection for a UN civilian deployment to Libya in a worst-case scenario. In Afghanistan, UNAMA is protected by a complement of gurkhas, who have used force on a series of occasions to protect UN bases and personnel. There are, however, concerns about using security contractors to guard UN missions elsewhere.

Any security mechanism constrains a mission's ability to interact with politicians and the parties to a conflict. However, this is less risky than deployment models that spread international personnel thinly - and potentially vulnerably - across a conflict-affected country. The 2011 attack on the UNAMA office in Mazar-i-Sharif demonstrated the risks inherent in maintaining a network of offices in an unstable country. UNAMA is now cutting back its network of provincial offices, although for budgetary reasons.

Just as it is typically wise for a political mission in a volatile country to follow a relatively narrow mandate, it is also advisable to keep the number of staff deployed low to reduce overall risks. This may mean limiting total staff dealing with issues outside the core politics of a mission's mandate, although any mission needs a sufficient complement of support staff to operate. Currently, of the UN’s three missions highlighted in this essay, UNAMA, UNPOS and UNSMIL, all have widely varying numbers of substantive staff in comparison to support personnel (refer to the table on page 20 for more information).1

Moreover, if a mission lacks “eyes and ears” on the ground it may struggle to make good political judgments. In some cases, it may be important for a mission’s political profile to have an office in a sensitive area. UNAMI, for example, maintains a presence in the contested northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk while UNSMIL set up an office in the anti-Gaddafi center Benghazi to balance its base in Tripoli.

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**Top 10 Political Missions by Size:**
31 July 2012*

![Bar chart](chart.png)

*Figures reflect actual, not authorized staff.

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DPA Guidance on Security Aspects of SPM Deployment:

- The primary responsibility for the security and protection of UN personnel rests with the host authorities, but the UN Department of Safety and Security (DSS) is responsible for operational support and oversight of the security management system.
- DPA staff should communicate closely and meet regularly with DSS, providing it with information about the nature and profile of the mission so that it can implement sufficient security measures for the mission and the UNCT as a whole.
- DSS must assess the potential security risk to staff and plan risk mitigation measures accordingly. Its assessment determines the number of security staff required and the location of the Mission Headquarters and field offices.
- In choosing security personnel, the mission may hire local staff, use host country police, contract local companies, or use Secretariat security officers.
- Close protection for the Head of Mission should always be included in the initial budget, even if it may ultimately not be necessary.
- In the start-up phase, mission managers should ensure that the security section addresses the immediate security of mission staff, and they must put a mission evacuation plan in place as early as possible.
- DPA staff must assist DSS in consulting with the UNCT on the ground and sensitizing the UNCT before the arrival of the mission.