



International Affairs Group

IAG is a ministry of the Center for Mission Mobilization. As we continue to mobilize believers to the least reached parts of the world, IAG has proven to be an invaluable resource to agencies and churches sending workers abroad.

The heartbeat of IAG is to enable strategic planning that will aid in fulfilling the Great Commission. By providing insight and foresight into geopolitical issues, we can save ministries time, energy, and resources when confronting instability within the ever-changing landscape in which their workers live and minister. We're committed to helping global ministries achieve their mission until all peoples have heard the true Gospel of Jesus.

Connecting Points

- IAG provides strategic intelligence analysis to mission agencies and churches.
 - We analyze global politics, international and civil conflicts, terrorism and maritime piracy, and persecution in order to determine their effects on the mission field.
 - Subscribers can expect to receive up to 150 one-to-four-page reports per year.
- IAG benefits greatly from correspondence with Christian workers around the world who are aware of the political, cultural, religious, and security dynamics around them.

The Director of IAG, **Jonathan D. VerHoeven**, also serves as the Center for Mission Mobilization's Director of Risk Management. By holding these dual roles, he understands both the need for well-structured risk management programs supported by useful intelligence and how to provide them. The IAG staff consists of other analysts with various backgrounds in international affairs, military special operations, private security, and risk management for overseas Christian ministries. His membership in the Risk Management Network has been crucial to his professional development, the growth of IAG, and the establishment of a risk management program at the Center for Mission Mobilization.

The purpose of the **Risk Management Network** is to provide a forum for proactive exchanges between those charged with security for organizations within the evangelical mission community. Related purposes include professional development, standardization, best practices comparison, critical security information exchange, and spiritual fellowship.

Membership in the network is open to leaders within the evangelical mission community who focus on Risk Management, Crisis Management, Global Security, and Physical Security. Associate memberships may be granted on a case-by-case basis for evangelical practitioners, IT security specialists, and school and church risk management personnel.

Connecting Points

- From its beginning in 2008, the RMN has grown to almost 40 individual members representing more than 25 different ministries, including the IMB, Frontiers, New Tribes Mission, Wycliffe/SIL, Mission Aviation Fellowship, and Pioneers.
- The RMN is always seeking new members.
- The RMN meets twice per year. For information about membership and meetings, contact Jonathan VerHoeven.
- Ministry executives are encouraged to attend meetings along with their risk management staffs.

The following article was written by a member of the Risk Management Network. He is a global security advisor for the members of the organization which he serves. This article is shared here with permission, though the author wishes that he and his organization remain anonymous.

Risk Management: Too Spiritual to Care?

It's remarkable how one gives little thought to locking a door until he becomes the victim of a burglary. It's often the case that afterward he finds himself locking not only doors, but windows as well. The same tendency seems to hold true with regard to managing global security risks for those serving the Lord cross-culturally. The default seems to be that we give the topic little thought until a significant security incident directly impacts a team member or close friend. Often in the ensuing chaos, team members find themselves either struggling with fear or collecting frequent-flyer miles on their way home.

As a global security advisor I receive increasingly regular reports of detentions, forced expulsions, kidnappings, or targeted attacks resulting in life-threatening injuries or the death of individuals serving overseas with organizations very much like our own. This is in addition to safety concerns such as traffic accidents, fires, and natural disasters. There's no question that our first line of defense against all these threats is prayer. As we submit ourselves to the Lord and intercede on behalf

of our families and friends, the Lord graciously watches over us. And yet in the same way that buckling a seatbelt does nothing to undermine our trust in the Lord or his care for us, developing an awareness of threats and risks impacting believers living cross-culturally represents godly wisdom.

Some suggest that to focus on security issues is simply unspiritual. It's as if thinking about such things somehow equates to a lack of trust in the Lord. It's interesting to note, however, that the Lord himself gave serious consideration to his own physical security (John 7:1, 8:59, 10:39, and 11:54); as did leaders of the early church (Acts 9:24-25, 9:29-30, 14:5-6, 20:3, 23:12-17). The truth is that while we're explicitly commanded to not fear men (Matthew 10:28) it's certainly not unspiritual to follow the example of Jesus and the early church in being aware of and reacting to significant threats.

So why is this topic more important now than it has been for many years? The simple fact is that the easy places, if there ever were any, no longer exist. The places that remain, those in which we now live and work, are to a large degree home to those who do not welcome what we represent. Whereas you may see yourself as a kind and loving soul offering the sweet fragrance of truth, some around you see you very differently. In fact, they see you as real trouble, as one who represents something that will tear apart everything they know and love. It's important to put what you're doing into the proper context and to understand that some people are highly motivated to stop you.

So how can one focus on security issues in a healthy way? I'm glad you asked. The answer is to strike a balance between the two extremes of having no awareness on one hand and being crippled by fear on the other. The former makes you, your family, and your teammates easy targets, the latter makes you unproductive and of little use to the Lord or anyone else.

Perhaps the best way to strike this balance is to cultivate an awareness of how threats and risks can be accurately assessed, and to then learn how to mitigate, or lower, the risks that can't be avoided. This is another way of saying that it's a great idea to know who would like to cause you harm, and to understand your strengths and weaknesses as you learn to live in such a way that makes their task very difficult. The best part about this process is that, believe it or not, some of the best steps you can take to mitigate risks actually enhance CP efforts. This may seem counterintuitive, yet it's been demonstrated time and again.

Finally, as I often say, there's no better security advisor than the Holy Spirit. There's simply nothing that can replace walking intimately with the Lord and listening carefully as He leads us to enter some doors and avoid others. May you know great peace and joy as you walk in intimacy with Him and in complete dependence upon His wonderful provision.