



ICRC

UNIT FOR THE RELATIONS WITH ARMED AND SECURITY FORCES

Armed Forces: Integration of IHL

Integration may be described as the **translation of IHL rules into concrete mechanisms or measures for the respect of its principles, specially protected persons and objects as well as the adoption of necessary means to this end.** It must necessarily and constantly address doctrine, teaching & education, as well as training & equipment issues.

An obligation for States

By ratifying the Hague Convention IV Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 18 October, 1907, States committed themselves to *"issue instructions to their Armed Forces which shall be in conformity with the Regulations respecting the laws and customs of war on land, annexed to the present Convention"* (article 1).

Likewise, by ratifying the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, States committed themselves to *"disseminate the text"* and to *"include the study thereof in their programmes of military (...) instruction"*. Article 127 of the Third Geneva Convention even provide for *"any military or other authorities, who in time of war assume responsibilities in respect of prisoners of war"* to be *"specially instructed"*.

The First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 8 June 1977, further details this obligation. It provides inter alia: that

Parties shall *"without delay take all necessary measures for the execution of their obligations"* (...) *"give orders and instructions to ensure observance (...) and supervise their execution"* (article 80); *"any military (...) shall be fully acquainted with the text thereof"* (article 83.2); *"commensurate with their level of responsibility, commanders ensure that members of the Armed Forces under their command are aware of their obligations"* (article 87.2)

Operations, doctrine, education, training and equipment

Success in military operations is shaped by doctrine, the way personnel are taught or educated and trained, as well as by the means available to them.

For instance, a commander issued with a new mission will revert to his doctrine for a statement of principles that should prove helpful in solving battlefield problems. His ability to outsmart his

adversary in that particular environment will depend on the teaching and education he received during his career path. His personal training and the means available to him and his troops will prove decisive.

Similarly, respect of International Humanitarian Law during operations depends on its previous integration into each and every dimension of military life.

Hence, it is not enough for the commander to be reminded by doctrine of the need to respect and protect prisoners of war (PoW), for instance. He must know what concrete measures must be taken regarding such persons and how to perform them. He must have been trained to integrate this dimension in his decision-making process and the execution thereof. Finally all this would be vain if he did not have the means (specialised troops and vehicles, etc) available for their protection, evacuation, interrogation or internment.

ICRC mandate

In 1977, the ICRC was mandated by the international community to support national programmes undertaken by States for the integration of IHL into the education, training, doctrine and operations of Armed Forces around the world.

Two-track approach

Over time, the ICRC has developed two different, but complementary, approaches towards Armed Forces.

- **Dissemination** activities (PREDIS) aim at obtaining understanding by the parties for ICRC activities and guarantee access to the victims and security.
- **Integration** activities (PREIMP) aim at having Armed Forces adopt concrete mechanisms or measures for the respect of IHL principles, specially protected persons and objects as well as the adoption of necessary means to this end.

According to the prevailing security situation in the country and its operational needs, a delegation may be lead to privileged one or the other approach or even a combination thereof.

Integration process

Integration is a continuous process. It may be facilitated by the ICRC, but gains momentum on its own. The term also covers the end-state.

Requisites

Pre-requisites for the success of the whole process are a top-down approach, with a written order by the highest military authority and formal appointment of one of the directorates of the General Staff for the design and/or conduct of a full-fledged integration programme.

Stability and continuity through institutionalisation of a programme and long-term appointment of personnel responsible are key: because people in the Armed Forces move on, technology evolves and the situations in which military force may be used are constantly reassessed by States according to their National Security.

Desired impact

ICRC support to the national program aims at getting the Armed Forces ready to operate within the framework of the established norms of the Geneva Conventions and their additional Protocols, as well as other relevant international instruments to which the State is a party.



Three dimensions

1. Doctrine focuses on how best to employ the Armed Forces in order to achieve national objectives at strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It provides personnel with a common language and a common reference point that allows shorthand professional communication. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application. It is periodically revised.

Together with its supporting instruments - tactics, techniques and procedures - doctrine must be in accordance with national legislation that in turn embodies international treaties and conventions. It must encapsulate IHL principles and provide concrete

measures and means for the respect of specially protected persons and objects.

2. Teaching & education focus on providing personnel with *theoretical* knowledge on *what* to do.

Besides IHL teaching adapted to all different levels, IHL principles as well as mechanisms and means for the respect of specially protected persons and objects are taught in all matters.

3. Training & equipment focus on providing personnel with *practical* experience of *how* to do. It is as practical and realistic as possible.

It must enable personnel to acquire *practical* experience by practicing and implementing the principles of IHL, as well as the concrete measures and means for the respect of specially protected persons and objects, as provided by doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures. Equipment provides personnel with the necessary assets enabling them to fulfil their missions in accordance with IHL.

Measure of progress

The degree of integration achieved may be broadly measured according to three steps. This assessment will, in turn, dictate the degree of ICRC support.

- Sensitisation: the highest military authority are aware of their obligations;
- Implication: the Armed Forces initiate and start conducting the process. ICRC support, from strong at the beginning, decreases with time;
- Autonomy: the Armed Forces are equipped to conduct the process on their own. The ICRC remains available if so wished.

