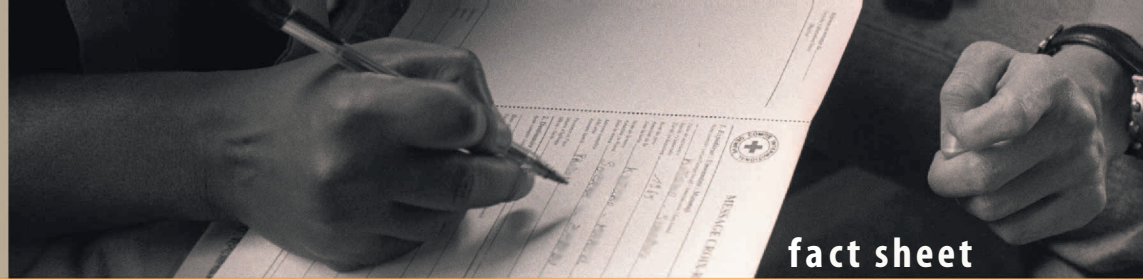




ICRC



fact sheet

#### Personnel

20 staff, including 9 expatriates

#### Budget in 2006

5,020,000 USD

#### Mission

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance.

It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

## ICRC WASHINGTON

### Delegation for the United States and Canada

The Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Washington DC, opened in 1995 and is the organization's main point of contact with the United States and Canadian authorities on issues concerning operations and international humanitarian law. The delegation is also a source of information for government officials, non-governmental and international organizations, academic institutions and other interested groups in the region.

From January 2002 onwards, representatives from the ICRC Delegation in Washington have been visiting detainees held at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba, and Charleston Navy Brig, South Carolina.

#### Visiting Detainees

As an independent and neutral humanitarian organization with a mandate conferred on it by international law, the ICRC assesses the conditions of detention facilities, the treatment of detainees and respect of their fundamental judicial guarantees. In 2005, the ICRC visited more than 500,000 detainees in approximately 80 countries.

The ICRC regularly visits individuals held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay and the Charleston Navy Brig, as well as one prisoner of war in Miami, Florida. Delegates who are highly experienced in detention work, together with ICRC medical personnel and interpreters, conduct multiple visits to Guantanamo Bay each year. To date, the ICRC has conducted nearly 30 visits to the facility, interacting with some 500 detainees and maintaining a working dialogue with detention authorities on the treatment of the detainees and their confinement conditions.

The contents of ICRC's reports are strictly confidential and for the exclusive attention of the concerned United States authorities in Guantanamo Bay and officials in Washington, who are responsible for ensuring that detainees are treated in accordance with international humanitarian law and other applicable bodies of law.

#### Promoting International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law comprises the rules which, in times of armed conflict, seek to protect people who are not or are no longer taking part in the hostilities, and to limit the methods and means of warfare employed.

One of the ICRC's missions is to spread knowledge and understanding of international humanitarian law. The ICRC focuses in particular on those people and groups who determine the fate of victims of armed conflict or who can facilitate humanitarian action and implementation of international humanitarian law. In the United States and Canada, these groups include government, armed forces, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks and universities.

## ICRC's Legal Status

The ICRC is a private association formed under the Swiss Civil Code. Its functions and activities are mandated by the international community of states and are founded on international law, specifically the Geneva Conventions, which are among the most widely ratified treaties in the world. Because of this, the ICRC is recognized as having an "international legal personality" or status of its own. It enjoys working facilities (privileges and immunities) comparable to those of the United Nations, its agencies, and other intergovernmental organizations. Examples of these facilities include exemption from taxes and customs duties, inviolability of premises and documents, and immunity from judicial process.

## United States Congress

The ICRC cultivates and maintains relationships with key congressional offices through dialogue and provision of timely, thorough and accurate information on ICRC's operations worldwide.

## Organization of American States

The ICRC concluded a cooperation agreement with the OAS in 1996 and a memorandum of understanding in 2003 which serve as tangible expressions of support and commitment for activities aimed at strengthening hemispheric compliance with international humanitarian law. The ICRC delegation in Washington actively maintains contact and productive relationships in accordance with those agreements.

## Civil Society

The ICRC delegation in Washington reaches out to influential leaders in civil society through, for instance, active participation in workshops; high-level symposiums and roundtable discussions at NGOs and think tanks; establishment of courses on international humanitarian law at universities; and engagement with media on operational contexts and humanitarian issues.

Many topics of concern to the ICRC are of considerable relevance and interest on the world stage today: the application of international humanitarian law in the fight against terrorism, civil-military coordination, relief assistance, the security of humanitarian workers, and protection of civilian populations during conflicts.

## Armed forces

States have a legal obligation to ensure the full integration of the international humanitarian law into their militaries' doctrine, training and education. The ICRC works with states around the world in this task and also develops relations with military and security forces for its own operational reasons.

The ICRC delegation in Washington works with the armed forces of the United States and Canada, NATO's Allied Command Transformation as well as the US-based private military and security industry to enhance mutual understanding between the ICRC and the arms carriers with which it shares an operational environment. For this purpose, the delegation participates in exercises, provides guest lectures at military schools and colleges and liaises with geographic and functional combatant commands as well as with corporate providers of military and security services.

## Supporting the American and Canadian Red Cross Societies

The ICRC works with Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide to enhance and build upon their capacities so that they can fulfil their responsibilities as members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: to provide humanitarian services in their respective countries.

The ICRC supports the American and Canadian Red Cross Societies in promoting knowledge and understanding of the Red Cross Movement, its role on the international stage, and international humanitarian law.

Among other activities, the ICRC:

- deployed senior logistics and tracing staff to support the American Red Cross response to hurricane Katrina;
- financially supported the launch, in Canada, of an ICRC study on customary international humanitarian law; and
- financially supported and participated in American Red Cross high-school teacher training workshops on international humanitarian law.

## CONTACT US

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