

1.3. DUTY OF CARE

As an organisation which operates in some of the world's most challenging environments, Albany makes the safety of staff and contributors its highest priority. Preparation is key to any security or emergency response and, consequently, Albany is rigorous in conducting proper independent assessments, providing general plans, protocols and procedures and modifying these to reflect the realities of the local environment.

According to the latest reports from Control Risks, the most significant risks in the target countries stem from the unresolved conflicts in Eastern Ukraine, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. Travel to all these regions should be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary since, in most cases, "the rule of law is extremely weak" and, in Eastern Ukraine, "there is a risk of sporadic, intense fighting". Key areas of concern in the breakaway regions include illegal detentions, kidnapping, small-scale bombings and abandoned ordnance. Elsewhere in the target countries, risks include turf-wars between criminal gangs and violent crime fuelled by alcohol and drug abuse.

In addition, corruption is widespread across the region and staff need to be aware of the consequences of being drawn into corrupt practices both for themselves and for the programme as whole. They should also recognise the use of compromising materials (kompromat) as a way of bringing pressure to bear on individuals and organisations. Most related risks can be mitigated by observing Albany's Do No Harm principles but personnel should also be wary of provocation by pro-Russian groups – particularly online – who may seek to discredit the project and its partners.

Albany has an ISO-certified security and crisis procedure as well as a Safety and Security Protocol (SSP) for deploying staff and contracted consultants. The SSP comprises:

- Location assessment – including general threat level, risk mitigation, weather and travel advice;
- Project assessment – including the attitude of security forces, public views of the project and the input of local contributors from a safety perspective;
- Deployment assessment – including accommodation, administration, travel and transport;
- Individual assessment – including proof of life, personal details, medical condition, inoculations and allergies;
- Key contacts emergency numbers and communications instructions – including a requirement for project consultants to communicate at agreed intervals and advise of any change in overall status.

The SSP is signed off by the individual concerned, the Managing Director and the Head of Human Resources and Administration before any deployment is authorised. A duty officer is on 24/7 standby in London, equipped with a dedicated pager and mobile phone. When required, the duty officer will execute an immediate follow-on response to any incident. Every action and report is properly logged. Actionable emergency information for immediate response is supplied through the completed SSPs.

An outline plan will be agreed with the Contracting Authority prior to implementation. This plan will include the results of the initial assessment, a risk register and a detailed breakdown of security and crisis procedures. It will act as the key reference document during the implementation period and will be updated on the basis of follow-up assessments and significant external factors or events.

All contract staff in and out of the target countries will be properly briefed to ensure they are aware of risks, protocols and procedures. This requirement will also apply to host nation staff who will undergo regular training on safety in the workplace and will be encouraged to introduce working practices which can mitigate avoidable accidents and ensure programme continuity. Furthermore, Albany will ensure that subcontractors, service providers and local partners comply with the same procedures.

The threat levels will be constantly monitored. Should it be determined that there is a risk/threat to any employees, the individuals concerned will be informed immediately and appropriate action will be taken. All employees, whether or not they are under threat – will be made aware of the situation. If threat assessments are high, Albany will take preventive steps to ensure the security of personnel, such as moving them to more secure environments. However, they will also take an overall operational and security perspective – for example, considering the risks associated with moving people to greater safety and their potential vulnerability during longer-distance travel.

Albany will continually engage with appropriate security institutions to ensure that the implementation team is abreast of all possible threats and levels of risk, particularly at sensitive times such as election periods and planned demonstrations. Consultants are expected to provide the team with anecdotal updates from the ground – not only in order to facilitate proper monitoring of the situation but also to ensure their wellbeing and to reinforce their confidence that project management staff are listening to them and responding appropriately to threat assessments.

All staff, consultants and project partners will be covered by Albany's Emergency and Special Contingency Response Policy. This policy is designed to ensure that any medical emergency or special contingency situation is dealt with effectively and efficiently and that any personnel and contractors who experience such an incident benefit from the appropriate duty of care. The policy details the responsibilities of all parties and an Immediate Response Framework.