

WASHINGTON (regional)

COVERING: Canada, United States of America, Organization of American States



ICRC regional delegation ICRC delegation

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	2,093
Assistance	-
Prevention	3,256
Cooperation with National Societies	932
General	-

▶ **6,281**

of which: Overheads 383

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	103%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	11
National staff (daily workers not included)	19

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ through special briefings given by its field staff, reinforced its operational dialogue with US political and military authorities
- ▶ was increasingly consulted by members of the US administration, security agencies and the law and policy system on detention/internment policy and other IHL-related and humanitarian issues
- ▶ stepped up telephone and videoconferencing services to restore/maintain contact between people in US custody at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba and their families in 22 countries
- ▶ strengthened IHL expertise by helping to establish common teaching practices at top law schools across the United States of America
- ▶ fostered exchanges between civil society and national authorities at fora on civil-military relations and IHL

Established in 1995, the Washington regional delegation engages in a regular dialogue on IHL and issues of humanitarian concern with government officials and bodies, academic institutions and other interested groups in Canada and the United States of America. The delegation heightens awareness of the ICRC's mandate, mobilizes political and financial support for ICRC activities and secures support for IHL implementation. It visits people held at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba. It works closely with the American and Canadian Red Cross Societies, focusing on their international activities and the promotion of IHL.

CONTEXT

The US administration continued to face significant economic and foreign policy challenges. National security remained a major concern, prompting the State Department legal adviser to reaffirm the right of the United States of America (hereafter United States) to self-defence.

Over the course of the year, the government stalled or backtracked on many of its detention policy initiatives, including efforts to close the internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba, transfer its inmates to the United States and try suspects through civilian courts. Mid-term elections in November 2010

resulted in a Republican majority in the House of Representatives and a narrow Democratic majority in the Senate, which increased uncertainty over policy directions.

At the international level, the United States continued to withdraw US combat troops from Iraq, but stepped up its military effort in Afghanistan.

The US response to the earthquake in Haiti was substantial. The year also saw the administration take the leadership on nuclear issues, re-engage with the UN Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court, and initiate a review of its stance on the Mine Ban Convention.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS			
PROTECTION			
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
Phone calls facilitated between family members ¹	489		
Documents			
People to whom travel documents were issued	1		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			
ICRC visits	Total	Women	Minors
Detainees visited	199		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	196		
Number of visits carried out	10		
Number of places of detention visited	2		
Restoring family links	Total		
RCMs collected	3,043		
RCMs distributed	1,972		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	407		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	25		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

1. Phone calls/videoconferences between people held in US custody in Guantanamo Bay and their families abroad

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The Washington delegation maintained close contacts within the US law and policy system connecting government, NGOs, media, think-tanks and universities. Network-building and awareness-raising helped the ICRC enhance its understanding of the system and engage in a substantive dialogue with the various components.

The ICRC expanded its dialogue with the US authorities, especially the Department of Defense, on the protection of civilians in military operations. It provided input on IHL for military doctrinal texts and for debates on the modalities of the use of force by the United States outside existing theatres of military operations.

Contacts with senior military personnel on US soil played an important role in promoting respect for civilians in battle zones. ICRC pre-deployment training helped heighten military awareness of the risks faced by civilians and of the organization's work and neutral, impartial and independent stance.

ICRC activities and working methods also formed the substance of briefings provided to US political and military authorities both by

the Washington delegation and visiting ICRC delegates from the field or the organization's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. These personalized briefings helped maintain US trust in the ICRC and funding for its operations. By organizing visits for congressional staff to its operations in Georgia and the Balkans, the ICRC aimed to give them first-hand insights into the humanitarian issues at stake and the ICRC's response.

As a matter of priority, the ICRC continued to visit people held in the Guantanamo Bay internment facility and helped them maintain family contact via RCMs and increasingly also through expanded telephone and videoconferencing services.

Efforts to establish the ICRC as a reference organization on IHL resulted in numerous invitations for the delegation to take part in government and civil society discussion panels on humanitarian and IHL-related issues. This led to lively interaction with a widening network of political and military circles, including, at the regional level, the Organization of American States (OAS).

As before, the delegation shared electronic and printed information on ICRC operations, as well as IHL reference materials, with authorities and civil society, including the media.

Cooperation continued with the American and Canadian Red Cross Societies, focusing mainly on a consistent approach to the media and IHL promotion across civil society. The two National Societies and the ICRC also worked together as the Movement rolled out its earthquake response in Haiti.

CIVILIANS

There continued to be civilian casualties as a result of US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The humanitarian consequences of military activity and the importance of conducting hostilities in line with IHL rules thus remained at the core of the in-depth dialogue between US authorities and senior military personnel and the ICRC, both in the United States and in the field. These discussions aimed to heighten awareness of the risks faced by civilians during military operations; combined with training sessions and briefings for the US military, they contributed to enhancing understanding of the ICRC's role and mandate (see *Authorities* and *Armed forces and other bearers of weapons*).

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

By year-end, 174 people remained in US custody at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station. They included: internees who had been cleared for departure by an Inter-Agency Task Force, but for whom no suitable host country had yet been found or whom the US authorities deemed to pose a security threat should they return to their countries of origin; people identified for indefinite internment or awaiting trial; and a small number sentenced by military commissions.

The detainees continued to receive visits, according to standard ICRC procedures, from delegates who checked that their treatment and living conditions complied with internationally recognized standards. The findings were shared confidentially with the detaining authorities. One detainee was visited in a detention facility on the US mainland.

Many of the detainees/internees had significantly improved family contact after family phone calls were introduced in 2008, including "humanitarian calls" arranged rapidly following the death of a close relative. The number of inmates able to interact visually with their families via videoconferencing, starting in 2009, grew rapidly as the service was extended to Saudi Arabia in September and to Yemen in December, raising to 22 the number of countries where it was available. In total, 489 phone calls and videoconference calls took place

in 2010 and delegates made 407 calls to convey messages between detainees/internees and their relatives. Family visits for all persons held at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station continued to be recommended by the ICRC, which offered its services to facilitate them.

The US authorities and the ICRC held regular discussions on detention-related issues, including clarification of the legal framework governing present and future US detention/internment at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station and in other operational theatres.

AUTHORITIES

Dialogue with an expanding network of political decision-makers remained essential to promoting respect for IHL and mobilizing support for the ICRC. Consultations with the US administration covered, for example, detention/internment-related issues, humanitarian concerns in Afghanistan and Iraq, ICRC operations elsewhere, and the geographic scope of IHL applicability. The US authorities and members of security agencies and the law and policy system sought the ICRC's views on topics ranging from detention policy reviews to the modalities of using force in potential military operations conducted outside existing battlefields.

The government used ICRC input for its policy review on anti-personnel landmines and a report on sexual violence in parts of Africa.

Congress members and staff gained insights into ICRC working methods through field visits to Georgia and the Western Balkans. Congressional counsels preparing for hearings on US drone policy and Truman Security Fellows obtained IHL expertise during ICRC briefings. Congressional staff studied IHL topics at a seminar hosted by the Congressional Research Service and another co-hosted by the Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, the University of Virginia and the ICRC.

Substantive dialogue with the Canadian and US authorities on the protection of civilians not or no longer participating in hostilities led to a better mutual understanding of viewpoints.

In Canada, official investigations into the treatment of Afghan detainees by Canadian forces were followed closely by the ICRC.

IHL is promoted throughout the Americas

The OAS and its related bodies drew on ICRC expertise on IHL, rules governing the use of force and humanitarian issues.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM	Guantanamo	USA
ICRC visits		
Detainees visited	198	1
Detainees visited and monitored individually	195	1
Number of visits carried out	9	1
Number of places of detention visited	1	1
Restoring family links		
RCMs collected	3,043	
RCMs distributed	1,972	
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	407	
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	25	

Following the earthquake in Haiti, the OAS referred to the ICRC family-links website in its disaster response information. At the organization's general assembly, member States adopted IHL-related resolutions, for example on missing persons and IDPs.

Diplomats and staff of inter-American entities studied IHL and other international norms at an ICRC course, while defence ministers of the Americas renewed their commitment to these bodies of law at their ninth conference. Contacts with Washington-based OAS diplomats enhanced support for ICRC operations in their respective countries.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The dialogue between the US military and the ICRC focused on the conduct of hostilities and protection of civilians in military operations, detention/internment-related issues and the inclusion of IHL elements in training and doctrine. Relations with the Department of Defense were further consolidated through high-level meetings. Operational dialogue was expanded to include the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy.

Pre-deployment briefings for US troops on the ICRC's mandate and activities remained a priority, particularly for Marines units deploying to southern Afghanistan, and were extended to Marines units preparing for global deployment at sea. Officers taking part in mission rehearsal exercises organized by the Joint Warfighting Centre and Canadian troops going abroad were similarly briefed.

Interaction with US Special Operations forces was substantiated through operational briefings conducted jointly with their training division and with the Joint Special Operations University. Staff at Special Operations Command headquarters were briefed on major ICRC operations.

Leading military education facilities, for example the National Defense University, pursued joint activities with the ICRC. Contact was consolidated with the US land forces through an ICRC visit to the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth and initiated with two additional Combatant Commands.

Contacts were expanded with Army, Marines and Special Operations civil affairs units. The Military Police School requested regular ICRC participation in their captains' career course. Career officers at specialized military schools were briefed on the ICRC and IHL, as were provincial reconstruction teams deploying to Afghanistan and, for the first time, participants in a Canadian Forces interrogators' course.

The US Joint Forces Command drew on ICRC input regarding IDPs for their Joint Rule of Law Handbook, while the military media received ICRC press releases.

Both the Canadian and the US armed forces sent representatives to the Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations in Switzerland (see *International Law and Cooperation*).

CIVIL SOCIETY

Key think-tanks and NGOs deepened their understanding of IHL and humanitarian concerns by drawing on ICRC expertise, for example regarding respect for civilians and health services in armed conflict and professional protection standards. The US Institute of Peace Working Group on Civil-Military Relations consulted the ICRC on guidelines for such relations and for peace-keeping operations. Others similarly shared expertise and worked with the ICRC to increase awareness of humanitarian issues and IHL-related topics by organizing or participating in events on such themes. This helped give the ICRC greater insight into key humanitarian and policy debates in North America.

Policy-makers and law experts in Canada and the United States, also drawn from government and military circles, built their IHL expertise and forged mutual links through participation in fora involving the ICRC, including events co-hosted with top universities. ICRC-trained experts went on to lecture at the ICRC's IHL courses in North America and Europe.

More than 6,000 people gained better understanding of humanitarian issues by viewing the "Our World At War" travelling photo exhibition and participating in associated events. The exhibition was co-hosted by the American Red Cross and, in Boston, by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, providing opportunities to forge new partnerships for promoting humanitarian topics.

The media and other target groups were updated on ICRC operations and IHL topics via the ICRC's electronic monthly newsletter and other information materials. More than 4,000 publications were distributed, including an IHL reference library requested by the US Department of Justice.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The American and Canadian Red Cross Societies cooperated with the ICRC to promote IHL, highlight humanitarian concerns and inform the media. During the initial Movement response to the earthquake in Haiti, they used ICRC family-links and media relations expertise.

Both National Societies expanded their IHL-related activities, particularly the Exploring Humanitarian Law school programme, with ICRC funding. The American Red Cross increased the programme's audience via its website, publications and teacher training. An ICRC-funded survey showed heightened awareness of IHL-related issues among US and Canadian pupils studying the programme.

The Canadian Red Cross drew on ICRC expertise to organize IHL events for diplomats and continued its joint project with the Liu Institute for Global Issues to mobilize IHL capacity in policymaking. ICRC-trained Red Cross volunteers took part in simulated field exercises of the Canadian military.