



OFFICE OF MISSION SUPPORT
DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

This policy sets out the position of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations with regard to HIV testing and uniformed peacekeepers. Where it differs from recommendations made in the *1999 Medical Support Manual for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, this policy takes precedence.

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ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a disease where the body's ability to resist infections and other conditions, for example cancer, is impaired.
Confidential	Information known only to the individual concerned and the persons with whom s/he chooses to share.
Counselling	Formalised system for advice relating to the decision to take an HIV test and the follow up of the result.
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus, causes AIDS.
Mandatory	Where an individual has no say in whether or not a test is to be performed.
Medical-in-confidence	Information can only be shared between the doctor and the patient and between treating physicians if deemed beneficial to the patient.
Mission	The peacekeeping mission.
PEP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis, testing and treatment package for use where there may have been accidental exposure to HIV.
TCC	Troop Contributing Country. The nation of a peacekeeper.
Testing	Test to directly or indirectly show HIV infection.
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/ AIDS.
Voluntary	Where an individual by his/her free will chooses to undergo a test.
VCCT	Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing.
WHO	The World Health Organization.



Introduction

1. The transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) among peacekeepers and host communities is a concern for the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Populations already suffering the devastation of war may be especially vulnerable to the virus. HIV is preventable if reasonable precautions are taken, but there is no cure. DPKO has developed pre-deployment 'Standardised Generic Training Modules' as well as in-mission HIV/AIDS awareness training and prevention programmes. Abstinence in the field is encouraged; however, male and female condoms are made available and missions distribute to contingents and UN personnel. Treatment for common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is also available. This document outlines DPKO's policy with regard to HIV testing of uniformed peacekeepers.
2. The United Nations' HIV testing policy has to conform to international human rights norms, in particular the principle of non-discrimination and the application of the 'least intrusive' means to achieve the demonstrably justified objective of preventing the transmission of HIV.
3. DPKO supports the right of the individual to know his/her HIV-status without fear of personal or professional discrimination. An HIV test should be accompanied by pre and post test counselling. Providing the scope for individuals to make informed and independent decisions to find out their HIV status is a critical component in influencing behaviour and preventing further transmission.
4. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1308 (2000), DPKO strongly supports a policy of Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT). The UN does not require that individuals at any time be tested for HIV in relation to deployment as peacekeepers.
5. The UN is cognizant of the fact that some troop contributing countries (TCCs) have a mandatory testing policy and do not deploy HIV positive personnel. DPKO respects this national requirement.



HIV Testing Pre-deployment

6. The sole medical criterion for the deployment and retention of a peacekeeper is fitness to perform peacekeeping duties during the term of deployment. In accordance with current medical and human rights guidelines, the HIV status of an individual is not in itself considered an indication of fitness for deployment in a peacekeeping mission. An HIV test is therefore not required by the United Nations.
7. Individual fitness must be determined by a thorough pre-deployment medical examination/service medical assessment, which is the responsibility of the TCC. National medical standards are employed to determine fitness, but as a rule UN medical standards, according to the policy of the Medical Services Division and DPKO, are the minimum acceptable for deployment in any peacekeeping operation. The medical examination must exclude those individuals showing signs of active disease, including clinical signs of immunodeficiency, such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).
8. Individuals in mission who are in non-compliance with the overall standards stated in the guidelines for pre-deployment medical examination should be repatriated.
 - Repatriation is at the cost of the UN if the change in medical status has clearly occurred while in the mission.
 - Repatriation is at the cost of the Troop Contributor where deployment of the individual has clearly been in breach of the guidelines.
9. The UN does not exclude HIV-positive personnel from serving in a mission because of their HIV-status. DPKO does require that all uniformed peacekeepers be offered VCCT prior to deployment. This should not be interpreted as a requirement for mandatory testing. That VCCT has been made available should be stated in the certificate of health.

In-mission

10. The mission must ensure that all UN personnel, including uniformed personnel, in the mission area have access to VCCT, including pre and post test counselling, at no cost to the individual.
11. HIV testing requires the informed signed consent of the individual and must be accompanied by counselling.



12. Where HIV status is important in the choice of medical treatment, or the patient is unconscious, special provisions will be defined in Office of Mission Support guidelines on VCCT.
13. In mission areas, confidentiality regarding both the request for a test and the test result must be maintained. Results are 'medical-in-confidence' and may only be shared with the consent of the individual. The national policy of the medical facility provider or that of the individual's nation cannot override the stated rules of confidentiality.
14. The UN strongly encourages that VCCT be available to all peacekeepers upon their return home.

HIV/AIDS Counsellors

15. It is strongly recommended that TCC's deploying more than 200 peacekeepers in a mission include at least one HIV/AIDS focal point in the contingent, certified to provide pre- and post test counselling.
16. Missions should have at least one international and one locally employed counsellor to provide counselling out of UN owned facilities. Both male and female counsellors should be available.
17. All missions must designate one female and one male medical personnel or a female counsellor to be responsible for care, counselling and support in cases of sexual violence or rape. This service must be available at all times.

Exposure to blood

18. In order to avoid unnecessary exposure to HIV and other diseases transmitted through blood and other bodily fluids:
 - All blood and blood products must come from sources that meet WHO requirements. Mission hospitals must maintain stocks accordingly.
 - Hospitals must maintain quality-assessed sterilisation of all medical equipment. Injection and suture needles must be single use only and disposed of as hazardous waste.
 - All UN first-aid kits must acknowledge the need to protect from exposure to blood and other bodily fluids and must include rubber gloves and resuscitation ('mouth-to-mouth') masks.
19. It is the responsibility of the Force Medical Officer (FMO) and/or the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in the mission to order and ensure that post-exposure



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prophylaxis (PEP) kits, for occupational exposure and in cases of sexual assault, are available and distributed to UN clinics and level IIs and IIIs (or equivalent). The kits are to be funded through the mission budget.

20. The FMO and/or CMO must ensure that staff, including uniformed medical personnel, are informed about the PEP kits and policy of use.

Review of policy

21. This policy is based on currently available qualitative and empirical data. The DPKO Office of Mission Support shall review it regularly, in consultation with UNAIDS, to take into account any developments in medical treatments and recommendations with regard to HIV and AIDS.