

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
National Records Center  
P.O. Box 648010  
Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

Control Number: COW2023002829  
Rolling Release 2

December 28, 2025

Ella Cleveland  
1234 Massachusetts Ave NW  
Apt 1023  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ella Cleveland:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) request received in this office on April 25, 2023 for documents concerning the "documentation center" required by 8 CFR 1208.1b.

We have considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing the record set and have applied the FOIA exemptions as required by the statute and the Attorney General's guidance. We have completed the review of 205 pages and have identified 205 pages that are responsive to your request. Enclosed are 174 pages released in their entirety and 31 pages released in part. We have reviewed and have determined to release all information except those portions that are exempt pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(7)(E) of the FOIA.

The following exemptions are applicable:

Exemption (b)(7)(E) of the FOIA provides protection for records or information for law enforcement purposes which would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law. The types of documents and/or information we have withheld could consist of law enforcement systems checks, manuals, checkpoint locations, surveillance techniques, and various other documents.

There may be additional documents that contain discretionary releases of exempt information. If made, these releases are specifically identified in the responsive record. These discretionary releases do not waive our ability to invoke applicable FOIA exemptions for similar or related information in the future.

This matter is in litigation. Should you have any questions, please contact Brian Levy at [Brian.Levy2@usdoj.gov](mailto:Brian.Levy2@usdoj.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jarrod T Panter".

Jarrod T Panter  
Acting Chief FOIA Officer  
Freedom of Information Act & Privacy Act Unit

Enclosure(s)

Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)  
Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations (RAIO)  
Research Unit

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## I. Overview

### Mission Statement

The RAIO Research Unit is dedicated to providing Country of Origin Information (COI) to support the information needs of all components of the Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate. One of the primary objectives of the Research Unit is to provide the most up-to-date, credible, and objective COI on human rights and country conditions to assist in the timely adjudication of RAIO applicants' claims. Research Coordinators (hereinafter "Researchers") in the RAIO Research Unit are RAIO Adjudication Officers who may specialize in COI relating to specific geographic regions. The regions to which Researchers are assigned are as follows:

- Asia
- Europe and Central Asia (including Afghanistan and Iran)
- Middle East and North Africa (including Turkey)
- The Horn of Africa (including Kenya, Chad, Sudan, and South Sudan)
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Latin America and the Caribbean

In addition to the Researchers specializing in specific geographic regions, other Researchers provide general assistance in research projects, backing up specialists in regions for which there may be a particularly high demand for information at a given time.

Researchers work from a wide range of publicly-available sources, expert contacts, and background knowledge to provide a number of research products and services, such as the following:

- Responses to queries from adjudicators and other USCIS staff, relating to current or historical information on foreign government operations, non-state actors, cultural practices, social conditions, and more, to aid in the proper adjudication of cases.
- Memos and briefing reports offering more expansive and detailed coverage of topics relating to or impacting future or current human rights or migration issues.
- In-person trainings or providing country- or issue-specific background information.
- Information and research guidance, via telephone or e-mail, for officers working with time-sensitive adjudications.
- Summaries of recent news and journal articles relevant to the RAIO mission.

### Core Values

The Research Unit holds the following core values:

**Objectivity:** We provide information that is free from bias and neutral in its representations of different points of view. We exercise evenhandedness and fair-

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mindedness in selecting relevant information in order to promote integrity in RAIO adjudications.

**Responsiveness:** We respond to our customers' queries and to other requests for information in a timely manner. We put together information on our website and in our database to facilitate access to information in a timely manner.

**Collaboration:** We collaborate with each other, with outside experts, and with our customers to produce high-quality research. We maintain a welcoming atmosphere in which we work across organizational boundaries and proactively seek out opportunities for information-sharing.

### History of RAIO Research Unit

In the 1980s, criticisms were leveled at the former Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) that asylum adjudications were being biased by foreign policy and other considerations, rather than objectively applying country conditions information. For these reasons, regulations were implemented in 1990 requiring the Director of International Affairs of the former Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) to maintain a human rights documentation center. Pursuant to the 1990 regulations, the Resource Information Center (RIC) was established in 1991 as a branch of the Asylum Division of INS. The RIC staff assembled country conditions information from a wide variety of sources, including governmental and non-governmental entities, academic journals, media sources, human rights monitoring agencies, and refugee advocacy groups. The RIC made this country conditions information available across the Asylum Division in response to a steady stream of queries regarding human rights conditions in countries throughout the world. The country conditions information provided by the RIC was independent from other government agencies to ensure that foreign policy or other improper considerations did not play a role in the adjudication of asylum requests.

The Resource Information Center (RIC) was later renamed the Country of Origin Information Research Section (COIRS), while continuing to operate as a component of the Asylum Division of the USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate (RAIO). In 2011, the RIC underwent a significant organizational re-assignment when it moved from within the Asylum Division to the overall RAIO Directorate. At that time, the unit was renamed the RAIO Research Unit, and it continues to operate under this name to the present day. In its current capacity, the RAIO Research Unit provides Country of Origin Information research and support to all branches within the RAIO directorate.

### Legal Foundation

Pursuant to its regulatory mandate, the mission of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Research Unit (previously known as the INS Resource Information Center) is to provide the USCIS Asylum Officer Corps with credible and objective information on human rights and country conditions in order to facilitate timely adjudication of asylum claims. In addition, as the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) primary research body on human rights related issues, the RAIO Research Unit assists other

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components of USCIS and DHS with research needs in related areas.

The regulatory framework broadly defines those activities of the RAIO Research Unit that are directly related to the provision of information on human rights conditions and the objective bases relating to asylum determinations:

8 CFR § 208.1, as amended, describes training of Asylum Officers:

PART 208 – PROCEDURES FOR ASYLUM AND WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL  
SUBPART A – ASYLUM AND WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL  
§ 208.1 GENERAL

(b) Training of Asylum Officers. The Associate Director of USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations (RAIO) shall ensure that Asylum Officers receive special training in international human rights law, non-adversarial interview techniques, and other relevant national and international refugee laws and principles. The Associate Director of USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations (RAIO) shall also, in cooperation with the Department of State and other appropriate sources, compile and disseminate to Asylum Officers information concerning the persecution of persons in other countries on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, torture of persons in other countries, and other information relevant to asylum determinations, and shall maintain a documentation center with information on human rights conditions. 8 C.F.R. § 208.1, 76 FR 53784, Aug. 29, 2011.

An additional framework for the COI Research Section’s activities exists in case law:

As a general matter . . . we expect the [Immigration and Naturalization] Service to introduce into evidence current country reports, advisory opinions, or other information readily available from the Resource Information Center.  
Matter of S-M-J, 21 I & N Dec. 722 (BIA 1997).

The Board of Immigration Appeals then, citing the *Basic Law Manual*, continued as follows:

The Asylum Officer should be fully familiar with the reports and country profile developed by the INS Resource Information Center, with the Department of State’s Country Reports of Human Rights Practices for the country being considered and with reports from Amnesty International and other reputable organizations, including academic institutions. *Id.*

Several appellate courts have also discussed the need (and obligation) to introduce evidence of reliable country conditions information into cases:

Uanreroro v. Gonzales, 443 F.3d 1197 (10th Cir. 2006):

The BIA itself has indicated that, in immigration proceedings, it expects government counsel to introduce into evidence “current country reports, advisory opinions, or other information readily available from the Resource Information

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Center.” See *Matter of S-M-J*, 21 I & N Dec. 722, 726-27 (BIA 1997). At least one circuit has chosen to remand an appeal for further proceedings based on the BIA's reliance on outdated information. See *Yang v. McElroy*, 277 F.3d 158, 163 (2d Cir. 2002) (remanding based on agency's failure to consult most recent country report and holding INS had “burden of production” based on its “greater access” to the information). But see *Meghani v. INS*, 236 F.3d 843, 848 (7th Cir. 2001) (declining to remand for agency's failure to consider most recent country report because it found no cases requiring the BIA to *sua sponte* take administrative notice of the most recent country report).

Mekhoukh v. Ashcroft, 358 F.3d 118 (1st Cir. 2004):

[H]ad Mekhoukh addressed his burden of proving his assertion that a non-combat assignment was unavoidable by inquiring about it, he might have discovered, as have we [the court], that Algeria has adopted a “Regularization” program for males of a certain age who have not fulfilled their military service, under which they may be excused from any further obligation. According to the 1999 Report of the INS Resource Information Center, which was available at the time of Mekhoukh’s immigration hearing, Algeria has established a program to permit draft evaders, even those who are residing outside of Algeria, to apply for “regularization” of their status.

Lukwago v. Ashcroft, 329 F.3d 157 (3d Cir. 2003):

[T]he response by the INS Resource Information Center (“RIC”) to an information request quoted an Amnesty International report, Amnesty International, “Uganda: Breaking the Circle: Protecting Human Rights in the Northern War Zone,” 17 March 1999, stating that “the LRA has abducted thousands of children and adults, has unlawfully killed hundreds, possibly thousands, of civilians, has raped thousands of women and beaten thousands of men, women and children.” C.A.R. at 496-97. The Amnesty International report continues, “[t]he control of the civilian population is a strategic issue for the government's Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) as well as for the LRA.... This puts civilians of all ages at the heart of the conflict, rendering them especially vulnerable to human rights abuse on both sides.” C.A.R. at 503. The RIC also noted an article by Child Newslines which quoted the story of a former child captive. The interviewee stated, “[m]y first killing was hacking someone with a panga (curved machete)... He was a civilian, an adult, 30 years old. He was abducted [by the LRA], then he tried to escape, so they made me kill him.” C.A.R. at 496.

Rios v. Mukasey, 268 Fed.Appx. 51 (2d Cir 2008):

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In support of this position, she provided an INS Resource Information Center document in the record entitled “Colombia: Information on Prospects for Avoiding Threats from Armed Groups by Relocating in Country” which describes the FARC as having a “presence in virtually all of the nations' 32 departments and urban centers and has a country wide capability to harm.” Accordingly, the IJ's finding that the record includes “no testimony, credible or otherwise, that the respondent could not internally relocate to another part of Colombia,” is not supported by substantial evidence.

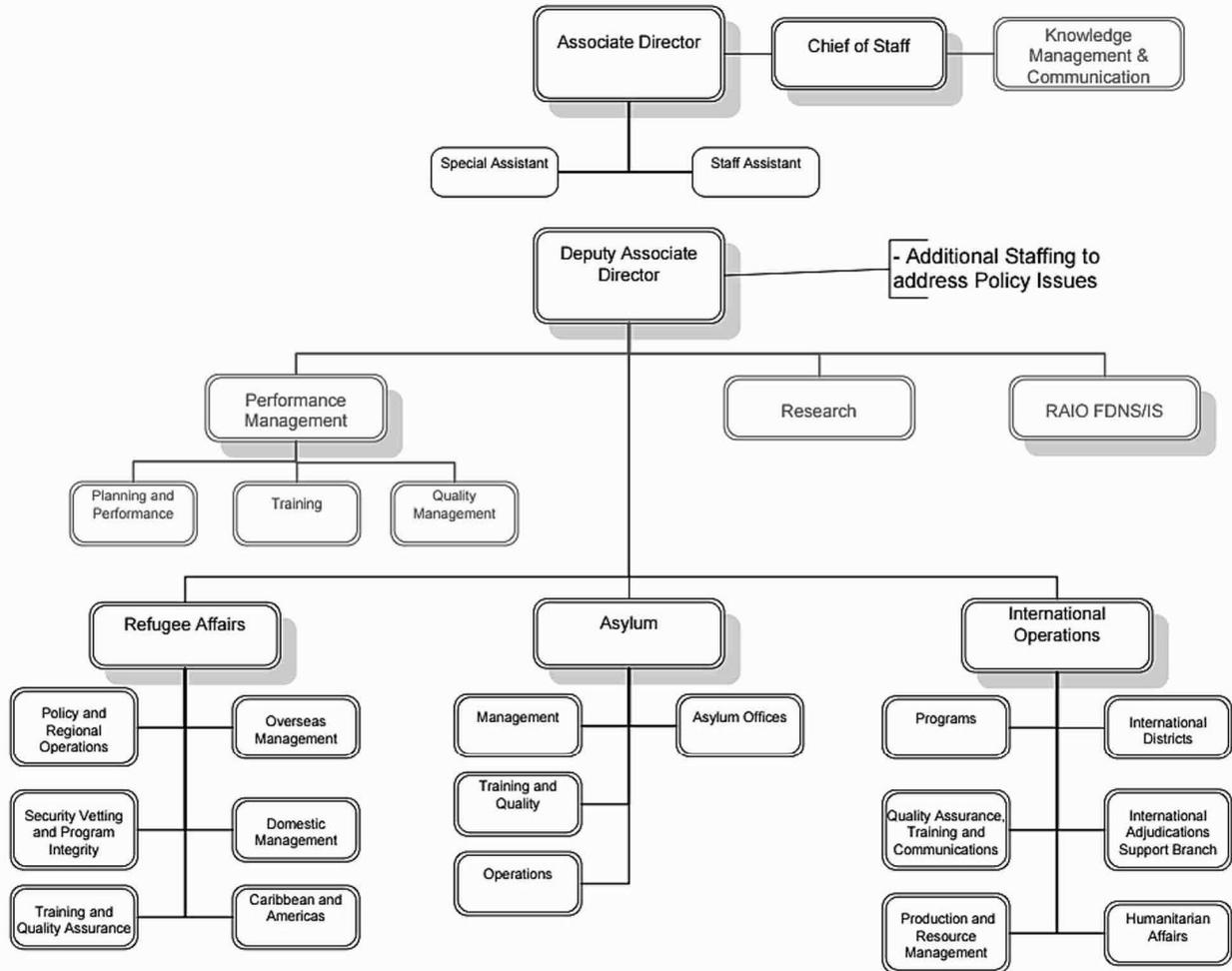
Johanes v. Holder, 358 Fed.Appx. 280 (2d Cir. 2009):

This Court has consistently declined to disturb the agency's finding that there is no pattern or practice of persecution against Chinese Christians in Indonesia. See *Santoso v. Holder*, 580 F.3d 110 (2d Cir.2009) (citing *In re A-M-*, 23 I. & N. Dec. 737 (BIA 2005)). Moreover, the record in this case includes reports by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Resource Information Center and the Department of State indicating that discrimination against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has greatly declined, and that many laws discriminating against ethnic Chinese have been repealed. Finally, the Board reasonably noted that Johanes's actions in remaining in Indonesia for a substantial amount of time after she claims she was harmed and returning to the country after arriving in the United States in 2006 undermine her claim, as does the fact that her children and husband continue to live safely in the country. See *Wensheng Yan v. Mukasey*, 509 F.3d 63, 68 n. 2 (2d Cir.2007); *Lie v. Ashcroft*, 396 F.3d 530 (3d Cir.2005); see also *In re A-E-M-*, 21 I. & N. Dec. 1157, 1160 (BIA 1998).

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## RAIO Organizational Chart

Below is a basic overview of RAIO organization. See the [RAIO ECN page](#) for the most up-to-date chart that includes current leadership.



## II. USCIS ECN Web Portal

### RAIO Research Unit on ECN

USCIS's Enterprise Collaboration Network (ECN) is an intranet system designed to offer a platform for each organization to share informative and up-to-date material of important resources and policies. The RAIO Research Unit uses its ECN page to present COI reports and other useful sources of information, with the aim of providing the RAIO directorate with up-to-date information and best practices for conducting research. Provided below is a brief overview of some of the topics covered on the RAIO Research Unit's ECN page.

#### Homepage Screenshot:



**Country Conditions Pages:** Country pages are resource guides that provide reliable, objective country conditions information and sources on select countries of origin. Research materials are carefully curated by the RAIO Research Unit's regional research coordinators to ensure the most relevant information is presented. Researchers have sole responsibility for maintaining the collections for their region. General topics covered are: recommended resources, maps, human rights reports, query responses, pre-departure training materials, and more.

**Query Responses:** This section is an archive of replies to focused queries or requests for information that are submitted in the course of the refugee status determination process. Query Responses can also be generated from a query from other branches of the Department of Homeland Security, or other U.S. government agencies. Query responses can range by country and topic. This archive is meant to help adjudicators and other interested parties who can search

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these files to find related cases, sources, and information already researched by the Research Unit. [For more information of Query Responses, please *see Chapter III.*]

**News Summary Bulletins:** Since the early 1990s, the RAIO Research Unit has collected and disseminated news articles of current conditions in countries producing asylum seekers and refugee populations. The present form of News Summary Bulletins include a brief summary and hyperlinks to human rights related news, media briefs, and reports available on the internet for the recent month. This section of the Research Unit's ECN provides an archive of all of the Research Units published News Summary Bulletins. [For more information about the News Summary Bulletins, please *see Chapter IV.*]

**COI Events & Training:** This section shows upcoming (and past) events related to COI and trainings. This includes RAIO RU Speaker Series events, Pre-Departure Briefings, FLETC trainings, and any other researcher-conducted trainings. Researchers are responsible for either adding applicable events to this calendar themselves or asking the administrative assistant to do so.

**Research Resources:** This section consists of links to some of the most useful resources that ought to be considered when researching COI. Some of the sources listed include: State Department Country Reports, Department of Justice Country Conditions Research, the Law Library of Congress, and Citizenship and Nationality Law Resources.

**Hot Topics:** A compilation of news headlines of current developments concerning refugee populations or relevant country of origin information. RAIO Research Unit's Researchers are responsible for providing headlines linked to articles when the news is initially breaking.

**Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Reports:** The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. This section has the most recent TPS reports on country information conducted by the Research Unit. [For more information on TPS reports, please *see Chapter V.*]

**RU Tracker:** A virtual record of past and current projects worked on by RAIO Research Coordinators. Each researcher is responsible for keeping the tracker up to date with information on the status of their projects. The tracker is the only mechanism in place for recording the status of projects. It should be updated regularly since data from the Tracker is reported at the beginning of every month. At year's end, the tracker can supply the unit with helpful data on how many queries were completed and the workloads of each staff member. It should be noted, that the RU Tracker is an internal feature of the ECN and not available to the public.

**RU Calendar:** The RU calendar is used by RAIO Research Unit's Researchers to post monthly work schedules, such as: Alternative Work Schedules (AWS), telework, outside trainings, and scheduled leave.

### III. Query Responses

Please see Appendix A: and Appendix B: for Query Response Guide/Template

Query responses comprise the most frequent Country of Origin Information reports researched and prepared by the RAIO Research Unit. These reports are usually based on specific inquiries received from RAIO Asylum and Refugee Officers, although if time permits, they may also be based on requests from other entities within the Department of Homeland Security, such as the Office of Chief Counsel, ICE Trial Attorneys, the Fraud Detection and National Security Division (FDNS), and USCIS Service Centers. Query responses are typically a short narrative (2-5 pages) based primarily on staff research and at times on information derived from expert opinions or from excerpts of articles, reports, or books.

*Note:*

From 1997 to 2004, the Research Unit publically published over 280 query responses to UNHCR's website [Refworld.org](http://Refworld.org) under its former directorate title, the RIC. The RU no longer publishes its products to the public and all of the RU's products are stored internally. Nevertheless, all of the previously published material is still available, and *all* of the RU's products are accessible via FOIA requests from the public, subject to the provisions of that law. ***There is no classified information within any of the RU's products, and officers should feel free to cite RU Queries as needed.***

(All of the RIC's previously published queries can be found by browsing in Refworld: [Home»Browse by Document Type»Query Responses»United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services](#))

### Query Response Procedures

The RAIO Research Unit is mandated to provide credible, objective country of origin information (COI) to RAIO Adjudication Officers. The RU also responds to other research requests, ***within its purview***, from other components within the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. government, foreign governments and other entities, as time permits. COI is most frequently provided to recipients in the form of **Query Responses**.

The purpose of this document is to guide RAIO RU staff through the process of receiving and acknowledging a query; fielding the query to a Researcher; and editing, finalizing, and distributing the Query Response to the requestor.

In this document, the term "query" generally refers to the original inquiry received from the requestor. "Query response," on the other hand, generally refers to the replies to specific COI queries received from USCIS and other entities within the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. government, and foreign governments. Following are the primary sources of COI queries received by the RAIO Research Unit:

- ❖ USCIS Asylum Division

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- Asylum Officers and Supervisory Asylum Officers; Training Officers; Quality Assurance Officers
- ❖ USCIS Refugee Affairs Division
- Refugee Corps Officers and Supervisors; Regional Operations Desk Officers; Training & Quality Assurance Officers

Following is a non-exhaustive list of additional entities that on occasion have posed COI queries to the RAIO Research Unit:

- ❖ USCIS Office of Chief Counsel (OCC)
- ❖ USCIS Office of Policy and Strategy (OPS)
- ❖ USCIS Service Center Operations (SCO)
- ❖ USCIS RAIO Humanitarian Affairs Branch (HAB)

### Formal Query Responses

Formal query responses are research products that provide a comprehensive factual analysis of a particular COI topic. These responses are formatted on the query template, fully cited according to the Uniform Citation Guide, and undergo a peer review process before they are distributed and published.

Formal query responses may contain general factual analysis, but they do not offer the Researcher's opinion on any case-specific issues or the legal merit of a particular claim. Formal query responses are uploaded to the ECN where they may be accessed by authorized DHS users, as they are designed to provide valuable country conditions information that may be relevant and applicable beyond the particular case at hand.

### Formal Query Examples

Have *Les Combattants* engaged in violent activities between 2011 to the present [December 2016]? Have they committed acts of violence against property? Have they used armed force or caused injury or harm to others during any of their demonstrations?

### **Background Information**

*Les Combattants* (Combatants or fighters) is an informal organization of nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the diaspora (especially in Belgium), who have engaged in acts of violence to oppose the government of President Joseph Kabila. Self-proclaimed *Combattants* operate in the diaspora, including in several European countries, in North America, and in South Africa. *Combattants* appear to be independent in their activities, without any international coordination.<sup>1</sup>

*Combattants* have allegedly engaged in violent activities, caused injury or harm to others, and committed violence against property. As discussed later in this document, *Combattants* have engaged in violent acts and incited violence in Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa.

### **Combattants' Mode of Operation**

A prominent newspaper in Belgium, *Le Soir*, explains *Combattants'* mode of operation and lists acts of violence that *Combattants* committed in 2011 against people and property [Translation]:

This was one of the most shocking outbursts of violence in December 2011: in the aftermath of the Congolese presidential election, supporters of the opponent Etienne Tshisekedi committed various acts of violence in the *Matonge* neighborhood of Brussels, and provided intelligence to their colleagues residing in France [leading them] to commit other targeted

<sup>1</sup> There have, however, been attempts by the *Combattants* of Belgium to organize formally, as Congolese Patriotic Resistance Council (*Conseil Patriotique Congolais de la Résistance*, CNRP). See Cheik Fita, *Combattants de Belgique. Adoption de la charte et du règlement intérieur*, cheikfitanews.net, May 18, 2013, <http://www.cheikfitanews.net/article-combattants-de-belgique-adoption-de-la-charte-et-du-reglement-interieur-117874751.html> (Accessed on Dec. 13, 2016) ; see also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmnRc9dtkyw> (Accessed on Dec. 13, 2016). There is, however, no indication that *Combattants'* activities have been carried out under the leadership of CNRP.

The following is an example of a TRIG report that was modified to be posted on the RAIO RU ECN as a formal query response. Specific TRIG language was deleted, but the research was deemed useful to other officers as COI.

Haiti: Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH)

Formal query responses can be found on the RAIO RU ECN page under Query Responses.

### **Informal Query Responses**

Informal query responses are research products that typically provide a concise, abridged analysis on a particular COI topic. Oftentimes, these responses provide personalized information concerning a specific case. They may take the form of an email or conversation, in which the Research Unit researches an issue on which information is needed and then consults

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with the requestor about available sources of information, recommended background reading, relevant text for citations, the relevance of country conditions evidence to a specific factual scenario, or other related topics. They may be posted on the ECN, but will not be in every case. An informal query response may be more appropriate than a formal query response in the following circumstances:

The query is case-specific and does not request background information that would be helpful in other cases.

News articles, reports, or websites provide the information the requestor is seeking.

The question was recently answered in a formal query response.

The query is very general and the requestor does not provide more specific follow-up questions.

Although informal query responses often provide case-specific information, they do not provide legal analysis regarding the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

### Informal Query Examples

*Are there any reports or evidence of police officers in El Salvador trying to date women when they report crimes or interact with the police?*

This query originated from the Refugee Affairs Division, RAIIO, USCIS.

The Research Unit was not able to find information regarding whether or not police officers try to date women who report crimes or interact with the police in El Salvador. However, the following sources and select quotes discuss some of the issues which may inhibit the reporting of crimes by women in El Salvador:

[El Salvador: Information Gathering Mission Report - Part 2: The Situation of Women Victims of Violence and of Sexual Minorities in El Salvador – Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Sep. 2016.](#)

“Several interlocutors noted that violence against women and domestic violence are underreported in El Salvador. Women do not report violence to the authorities because of lack of confidence and the widespread belief that the criminal justice system is ineffective and that perpetrators were unlikely to be prosecuted. Women and young girls who are subjected to physical and sexual abuse by gang members are reluctant to report it because of fear of reprisal, as they can be seen by gang members as police informants...

Interlocutors pointed out that women do not have confidence in authorities to file complaints with them.

ORMUSA indicated that impunity for gender-based violence remains a problem and the government does not take steps to improve the situation. The Secretariat of Social Inclusion similarly stated that there are high levels of impunity in El Salvador regarding violence against women and domestic violence. ORMUSA indicated that some prosecutors register femicides as deaths in connection to the indictable crime of "illicit associations" or other "less serious crimes."

The following are additional examples of informal query responses:

Informal query response (list of sources): [Cuba: Treatment of Returned or Deported Migrants](#)

Informal query response (links to relevant sources placed in context): [El Salvador: Anti-Gang Self-Defense Groups](#)

Informal query response (sources and select quotes): [El Salvador: Police Officers Trying to Date Women Who Report Crimes](#)

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Informal query response (mix of sources and select quotes, links to sources in context):

Venezuela: Chamos de la Resistencia or La Resistencia (Youth Resistance)

Informal query response (via email, not worth posting): Origins of Names of MS-13 and Barrio 18 (see attached)

Informal query response correspondence via email:

From: [Researcher]

Sent: [Date, Time]

To: [Asylum Officer]

CC: raioresearch@uscis.dhs.gov

Subject: Origins of Names of MS-13 and Barrio 18

Question: Please provide some information on the origins of the names of MS-13 and Barrio 18.

Dear [Asylum Officer],

Please see the following information on the origins of the names of MS-13 and Barrio 18.

MS-13

“The MS13 was founded in the "barrios" of Los Angeles in the 1980s. As a result of the civil wars wracking El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, refugees flooded northward. Many of them wound up in Los Angeles, living among the mostly Mexican barrios of East Los Angeles. While the Mexican gangs reined in the local underworld, the war-hardened immigrants quickly organized themselves into competing groups, the strongest of which was called the Mara Salvatrucha.

The gang was initially composed of refugees from El Salvador in the Pico Union neighborhood, which is where the name comes from: "mara" is a Central American term for gang; "salva" refers to El Salvador; "trucha," which means "trout" in English, is a slang term for "clever" or "sharp." However, with the concentration of Spanish speakers in Los Angeles, the gang expanded into other nationalities and then into other cities.”

See MS13, InSight Crime

Barrio 18

Barrio 18, or the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang, was named for the street near where it was founded in the 1960s in the Rampart district of Los Angeles.

See The Deported L.A. Gangs Behind This Border Kid Crisis, The Daily Beast, Jul. 11, 2014.

***Query Responses for the El Rescate Index of Accountability (ERIA) caseload***

One distinct caseload of queries received by the RAIO Research Unit is comprised of requests for research of the *El Rescate Index of Accountability* (referred to as ‘ERIA’), a searchable

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database containing records of human rights violations that occurred during El Salvador's civil war (January 1, 1980 through January 1, 1992). Each query and response for the ERIA caseload is case-specific. The research product is always presented as an informal query response that provides a concise analysis on a particular applicant's service in the armed forces during the civil war. The responses are not formatted on the query template, are not cited according to the Uniform Citation Guide, and are not uploaded onto the ECN. The response does not provide legal analysis regarding the merit of any particular claim to any immigration status.

The following section on 'Query Intake Procedures' includes issues that apply to the ERIA query response caseload. ERIA queries are submitted via email to the RAIO Research inbox. ERIA queries are assigned to the Latin America & Caribbean Researcher, or whoever has been designated as the person handling ERIA research queries. The RAIO RU Administrative Assistant has primary responsibility for ensuring that all queries are flagged for the appropriate Researcher and that the Researcher has been notified. Acknowledgement of the query should be sent to the requestor as soon as possible. The query should be catalogued in the RU Tracker. Please note that Asylum-HQ has asked that we do not reply to any ERIA research requests we receive from Asylum Officers, and to forward them to Giacomo Picciotto, Asylum-HQ.

If handling the ERIA caseload as an ongoing assignment, please review *Appendix I-1: Background of El Rescate* and *Appendix I-2: Details used in an ERIA search*.

A search of the database is conducted using the relevant details of military service as provided in the query. A search of the database is intuitive and can be completed in a short period of time [See *Appendix I-3: ERIA access and basic search procedures*].

A query rarely includes all the details of military service that we would like, as noted in *Appendix I-2: Details used in an ERIA search*, but there are usually enough details to commence a reasonable search. At times, you may have to conduct a search with the bare minimum. You might be able to piece together a better search by scanning the more in-depth reference materials accumulated by the RAIO RU [See *Appendix I-4: Extensive reference material*].

The query response will include a summary of the search inputs as well as the results in terms of human rights violations connected to the unit(s), location(s) and date(s) of service. The provided boilerplate text can be amended if necessary as long as the key issues are addressed. The query response may include an attachment of the records of human rights violations associated with the unit/location/timeframe. [See *Appendix I-5: Text for ERIA query responses*]

### Query Intake Procedures

There are a number of ways in which a query may be transmitted to the RAIO Research Unit. While all queries are processed regardless of the method of transmission, Research Unit staff members should encourage enquirers to submit their queries to the Research Unit inbox at [RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov).

#### **1. Methods of Query Submission**

**Queries submitted via email to the RAIO Research inbox**

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The **RAIO Research inbox** ([RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov)) is a shared inbox for all members of the Research Unit. New researchers must request access by filling out a Network Access Request (G-1160) via myIT, specifying that the [RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:RAIOResearch@uscis.dhs.gov) Shared Mailbox should be added to the researcher's account, with permission to Send on behalf of it (as needed, another member of the office can request access on behalf of the researcher). This inbox is the most common way for the Research Unit to receive queries and the most convenient location for monitoring the overall inflow of queries. While providing trainings, all Research Unit staff should encourage requestors to submit their queries to the RAIO Research inbox in order to prevent requests from languishing unattended in the personal inboxes of staff who may be out of the office.

The RAIO Research Administrative Assistant has primary responsibility for monitoring the RAIO Research inbox throughout the day and then notifying the appropriate Researcher upon receipt of each new query. For instance, if a query requests information about illegal logging in Thailand, the request should be forwarded to the research coordinator for Asia. The email containing the query request should be tagged in Microsoft Outlook by the Administrative Assistant to indicate which staff member will be handling the query request.

All staff members of the RAIO Research Unit are encouraged to do a daily check of the RAIO Research inbox. If any Research Unit staff notices an undesignated query in the RAIO Research inbox, he or she should immediately forward the query to the appropriate Researcher. The Researcher should additionally be tagged in Microsoft Outlook RAIO Research inbox with their designated color-code. The color-code assignments are meant to give a visual to all Researchers when inspecting the RAIO Research inbox. This visual ensures that all queries have an assigned researcher and prevents query requests from being overlooked.

### **Queries submitted via email to individual staff members**

When a requestor sends a query to a Research Unit staff member's personal email inbox, even if the query falls within the staff member's region(s) of responsibility, **the query must be forwarded to the RAIO Research inbox**. This is to ensure that a copy of the original query will be accessible to all RAIO Research Unit staff in case of absence of the regional coordinator who is processing the query. Encourage the requestor to send all future queries to the RAIO Research inbox.

### **Queries submitted by phone, fax, or in person**

Occasionally, queries are submitted to the Research Unit by phone, fax, or in person. Direct the requestor to instead send the query to the **RAIO Research inbox**. If it is not convenient or feasible for the requestor to do this, the staff member who first receives the query submitted by phone, fax, or in person shall notify the appropriate

Researcher of the query via email and copy the RAIO Research inbox.

## 2. Assignment of Query to Researcher

Regardless of the initial method of submission for a given query, all queries should end up in the **RAIO Research inbox** as noted above. The RAIO Research Administrative Assistant has primarily responsibility for ensuring that all queries are flagged for the appropriate Researcher and that the coordinator has been notified.

## 3. Acknowledgement of Query to Requestor

It is the responsibility of the designated Researcher to acknowledge receipt of the query to the requestor via email. This acknowledgement must include the following:

- A. When sending the initial email acknowledgement of a query to the requestor, always **CC: the RAIO Research inbox.**
- B. **Restatement of the Query.** By restating the query to the requestor, the Researcher asserts his or her understanding of the information request. This allows the requestor the opportunity to correct the Researcher's interpretation of the query, if necessary.
  - i. **Too much information provided by the requestor.** When a requestor provides too much information, it is the responsibility of the Researcher to hone the query to its essential components, using a statement such as: "The Research Unit understands your query to be . . ."
  - ii. **Not enough information provided by the requestor.** When a requestor provides too little information, it is the responsibility of the Researcher to solicit any additional details from the requestor that will help identify the scope of the research.
  - iii. **Requestor submits questions that are unrelated to country conditions.** The RAIO Research Unit does not respond to questions that are unrelated to country conditions. Often, such questions regard application of law. If possible, suggest an alternative country conditions question to the requestor, or submit a request to the Law Library of Congress when there is an issue of foreign law. Note that receiving responses from the Law Library of Congress typically takes four to six weeks.
- C. The Researcher should ask for a deadline if the requestor does not provide one. The Researcher should also try to provide a **projected date of completion** of the query response to the requestor.

## 4. Cataloguing the query in the RU Tracker

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Assigned queries should be catalogued in the RU Tracker in order to allow other team members to monitor progress on the query. Once a Researcher has been assigned a query, he or she should record it on the RU Tracker on the ECN. The following information should be input in the RU Tracker: the query title, the subject line of the initial query e-mail, type of query (formal or informal), date of receipt, start date, and due date (if applicable). This record can then be updated once the query response has been completed.

## Researching and Drafting

### Research Guidelines

#### **Assure Accessibility of Sources Cited**

In order to ensure transparency and to be able to retrieve the information used, consistent documentation and archiving is essential. Copies of all source material integrated into a research product, if that material is not available on the internet, should be stored in the Researcher's internal documentation system to ensure that access to the information will be possible in the future.

#### **Source Assessment**

Before incorporating information into a query, evaluate whether the source is reliable by carrying out a source assessment. When evaluating a source, consider the following factors:

- Reputation
- Methodology
- Intended audience
- Tone, style, and language
- Potential bias or affiliation
- Date of publication

#### **Corroborate information with other sources**

Cross-checking information is necessary to create an accurate, current, and balanced depiction of a particular subject matter. Use an assortment of sources (e.g., governmental, international, non-governmental, media, academic, advocacy organizations, etc.) to counteract the potential biases of individual sources. Strive for diversity and variety and look for sources that will potentially reflect diverse opinions.

## Guidelines on contacting oral sources

Phone interviews of regional or topic experts are often a valuable resource when information on a certain issue is not readily found. When using information provided by oral sources to respond to a query, please observe the following guidelines:

Obtain permission from the source to ensure that s/he agrees to being cited to in a query response. Inform the source that information cited from a query response may end up in the court system and as a matter of public record, but the source will not be cited by name. (See: **Appendix D: Permission to Cite Draft Email**)

***Do not reveal details of the case in question that may lead to the identification of the applicant, compromising their privacy.*** Bear in mind that all refugee and asylum applications are confidential and no information that could identify the applicant can be passed along to a member of another government, particularly the government of the applicant's country of origin.

Confirm quotes from the source that will be used in the query response. This should be communicated through email so that there is a record of the agreement.

## *Drafting Guidelines*

**Present the information in an objective manner.** The tone and structure of the research product should reflect an unbiased and neutral stance. RU products should contain analysis and summarize the information presented. Researchers should refrain, however, from providing personal commentary or legal analysis, and should avoid using judgmental or conclusory language.

### Example (in bold) of an inappropriate statement:

[Applicant] states that he was a commanding officer on the Haitian National Police force, yet he denies committing atrocities or having knowledge of atrocities against civilians. **This is not credible given the documentation available on human rights abuses against civilians by the Haitian National Police force and the applicant's rank within the force.**

### Example of a more appropriate statement:

In a July 2005 report, Amnesty International states that "gross human rights abuses by the Haitian National Police force have been rampant during the past two decades."<sup>12</sup>

**Structure the text in a logical way.** Arrange information in a way that makes it easy to understand for the reader. Depending on the topic, information should either be presented in

order of their importance or chronologically. In some cases, dividing the query response into sections may be appropriate.

**Make cross-checking and corroboration visible for the reader.** Include a variety of sources that provide information on a given research issue. State clearly which source provided what kind of information, and explicitly point out where sources corroborate or contradict each other. When information cannot be found or cannot be corroborated, inform the reader of your unsuccessful research efforts.

**Use a disclaimer** to inform the reader of the scope and limitations of the product. When information cannot be found or cannot be corroborated, inform the reader of your unsuccessful research efforts.

*[The following disclaimer paragraph is included at the end of all query responses.]*

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RAIO Research Unit within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

### Expert Opinion

Please see Appendix C: for a Draft email on contacting an Expert

Expert opinion is an excellent way for Researchers to supplement their research for the more difficult cases that have minimal available sources. Additionally, the Research Unit has developed many relationships with outside expert sources throughout the years such as the Wilson Center, Brookings, CSIS, and various government agencies. Researchers are encouraged to develop their knowledge base and network with experts from such institutions and should in turn utilize these networks. These types of networks can be especially useful for providing expert testimony in query responses. In doing so the researcher should be mindful to provide the appropriate citation of the expert and should not publish their information without their consent.

## Peer Review and Revision

### ***The Peer Review Process***

The peer review process facilitates communication of suggestions, constructive criticism, and editorial corrections, thereby ensuring that all work products meet the quality standards set forth by the RAIO Research Unit. All formal query responses must undergo peer review. Informal query responses are not required to undergo peer review, though the practice is encouraged for all work products. During the peer review process, the reviewer will evaluate a colleague's research product, ensuring the following issues have been properly addressed:

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**Has the question been answered?** Is the information presented relevant? Are the subject matter and specific issues adequately covered in the report?

**Are the substance, style and presentation of information appropriate?** Has the research product provided information in a neutral, objective manner? Are there any inconsistencies, bias or other deficiencies in the research product? Does the research product have a clear structure and layout?

**Are grammar and spelling correct?**

**Are all sources correctly cited?** Is every piece of information corroborated? Are there any omissions of or contradiction in key information from the source documents?

**Does the response contain any personally identifiable information regarding the applicant that needs to be redacted before sending response or posting to the ECN?**

**Does the response include the disclaimer paragraph that is included at the end of all query responses?**

### *Revision of Query Responses*

Once the product has undergone the peer review process, the author may decide whether or not a suggestion made by the reviewing colleague will be integrated into the research product. However, when the suggestions relate to matters such as correct citation, grammar, and spelling, the author is responsible for incorporating these corrections into the research product.

## Submission Procedures

### **1. Responding to the Requestor**

When the query response has been completed, it can be sent to the requestor through email and should be either forwarded or cc'd to the RAIO Research inbox. A formal query response can be sent as an email attachment; an informal query response can be directly written or pasted into the body of an email. Inform the requestor that any follow-up questions or requests for additional information can be sent to the RAIO Research inbox.

### **2. Uploading onto the ECN**

All formal query responses are uploaded onto the ECN for interagency circulation. Upon completion of a formal query response, the Researcher should upload the query onto the RAIO

Research Unit's ECN page in the Query Responses section.

### ***3. Updating information in the RU Tracker***

The status of a finalized query response should be updated in the RU Tracker to indicate its completion. The Researcher assigned to the query shall update the query's status in the RU Tracker to "completed"; alternatively, he or she may contact the Administrative Assistant to request that the status of the query be changed.

## IV. News Summary Bulletins

Please see Appendix E: for NSB Template

The RAI0 Research Unit's News Summary Bulletin (NSB) is issued monthly and is archived on the RAI0 Research page of the USCIS ECN. The News Summary Bulletin is a compilation of current open sources, with hyperlinks, presenting reputable reporting from media and human rights monitors regarding current human rights and sociopolitical developments in countries from which refugee-status applicants and asylum-seekers originate. The news articles are briefly summarized and organized into the global regions used by the Research Unit.

Over the course of each month, each Researcher assembles the news articles and country reports that relate to his/her region of specialization, as well as noting any new research products. Near the end of the month, by the deadline specified by the RU Administrative Assistant, Research Coordinators forward their portion of the News Summary for compilation by the RU Senior Administrative Assistant. The draft is then forwarded for editing by the RU Chief or a designated staff member. The RU Senior Administrative Assistant will send the report to all of RAI0 via email, and will post the report on the USCIS ECN in pdf format. A subscriber feature is included in the report so that government employees can subscribe to receiving the monthly report in their email boxes. [See Appendix E: *News Summary Template*.]

### Collecting articles

The target number of articles per region is five, though the number of articles per region will vary each month, reflecting changed country conditions. Although most regions encompass more than five countries, it is not necessary to assign an article for every country within the region.

Articles should be collected throughout the month, not just during the week before submissions are due. It is suggested that you collect all relevant articles found throughout the month into a single word document. Surplus articles may be pared down before submissions are due, or they may be uploaded onto the Hot Topics section of the ECN.

### Formatting

Regional headings (e.g., Asia, Horn of Africa) are written in Franklin Gothic, 16 -pt. font, all-caps and centered.

Country headings (e.g., China, Sudan) are written in Cambria , 14-pt. font, bolded, and left-aligned.

- Multiple articles for a given country should be listed in reverse-chronological order (i.e., the most recently published articles are listed first).
- Articles pertaining to the entire region should be located before the alphabetically first country in a given region and grouped together under one heading.

There should be a space between the country and the first article pertaining to that country.

**Article title:** The article title should contain a hyperlink to the webpage hosting the article. The title is written in Cambria, 11 pt. font, left-aligned.

- Under the hyperlinked title, the name and date of the publication are displayed. List the name of the publication, followed by a hyphen (–), then list the date of publication in the following format: Month Day, Year.
- Articles whose title begin with ‘country + colon’ (e.g., ‘Philippines:...’) should have the country name removed from the title to avoid redundancy.

**Article description:** After the title, a brief summary of the article should follow. Use original language; do not merely copy and paste an excerpt of the article. Please try to keep your summation between two to three sentences in length.

- Line spacing of article descriptions should be at 1.5, as opposed to single-spaced, ‘Multiple’, or ‘At Least’. Copied text often changes spacing subtly when the font is changed, so please make sure 1.5 spacing is consistently selected under Paragraph > Spacing > Line spacing options.
- **See also:** When citing to an additional article, it should appear as an endnote with the “*see also:*” signal. *See also* should be italicized and marked off with a colon. Next, the article title appears as a hyperlink to the article, followed by the name and date of publication. Descriptions of cited articles should be avoided, but should be placed in parentheses if absolutely necessary.

## Submission procedure

The target publication date for the NSB is the beginning of the next month (e.g., February 1<sup>st</sup> for the January, 2015 News Summary). The submission deadline should allow sufficient time for the team members to submit their articles, for the RAIO Library to link the articles to EOS, and for RAIO clearance to authorize the publication.

After receiving all the articles from the team members, place the articles on the News Summary Bulletin template. Ensure that the articles are correctly formatted and proofread for spelling or grammatical errors.

After successfully formatting the news summary bulletin, submit it to Roy ([leroy.g.potts@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:leroy.g.potts@uscis.dhs.gov)) to proofread. Roy will respond with changes, and the NSB should be edited accordingly.

After appropriate changes are made, send the NSB to the RAIO Library ([raiolibrary@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:raiolibrary@uscis.dhs.gov)) to hyperlink the articles to the EOS catalogue. Allow approximately one business day for the links to be added. RAIO Library will send an updated version of the NSB containing the new links.

Save the NSB as a “.pdf” file and upload it to the [ECN](#) under News Summary Bulletins.

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Send the ECN link to the NSB to RAIIO Clearance ([RAIO-Clearance@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:RAIO-Clearance@uscis.dhs.gov)). CC Roy, Michael Defensor ([Michael.R.Defensor@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Michael.R.Defensor@uscis.dhs.gov)), and Alexandra Grammer ([Alexandra.C.Grammer@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Alexandra.C.Grammer@uscis.dhs.gov)). RAIIO Clearance will then distribute the News Summary Bulletin to intended recipients.

## V. Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

Please see Appendix F: for TPS Templates

Based on compelling country conditions, a foreign government may request that the United States Government designate a given country for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for reasons delineated in the Immigration & Nationality Act (INA, Section 244(b)(1)). Upon review by USCIS, the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for Temporary Protected Status due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. This designation is based on extraordinary and temporary conditions in a particular country, such as an ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster such as earthquake or hurricane, or an epidemic. [See Appendix F: TPS Templates by Category.]

Once the TPS designation has been authorized, USCIS may grant TPS to eligible nationals of a designated country or part of a country, or to persons without nationality who last habitually resided in the designated country, who are already in the United States. TPS is a temporary benefit that does not lead to lawful permanent resident status or any other immigration status. During the TPS designation period, TPS beneficiaries are eligible to remain in the United States and may obtain employment authorization, so long as they continue to meet the requirements of TPS status. TPS beneficiaries may also be granted travel authorization as a matter of discretion, and cannot be detained by DHS on the basis of immigration status.

### Procedures

The USCIS Office of Policy & Strategy requests the RAIIO Research Unit to prepare a report detailing the relevant conditions for a given country under consideration for TPS or for an extension of current TPS. (OP&S concurrently requests a report from the Department of State). The report prepared by the Research Unit is part of the deliberative process of the USCIS recommendation memo that is sent to the Office of Policy & Strategy and eventually forwarded to the Secretary of Homeland Security for a determination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The Research Unit's TPS report should not be posted on the USCIS ECN until a conclusion has been reached by the Secretary of Homeland Security and notice of the Secretary's decision is published in the Federal Register. In the event that the country in question is designated for TPS, or has its TPS extended or re-designated, a notice will be announced in the Federal Register. At that time, the Research Unit can post its TPS report to the ECN, labeling it as a report that has been utilized by the Working Group for TPS consideration. In an effort to establish uniformity in the formatting of these reports, RU staff should refer to the attached template in Appendix E for guidance on title, subject headings and subheadings, margins, and headers.

The TPS process for any given country typically requires repeated periodic research over a number of years when the designation draws near its date of expiration and a possible continuation of status needs to be reviewed. The Research Unit's ECN site should maintain a collection of all previous TPS-related reports prepared by the unit, in addition to posting the most recent report.

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It is important to note that documents that are part of a deliberative process are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, once posted to a public site such as the Federal Register, the privilege associated with deliberative process has been waived and the public may obtain the report by means of a FOIA request.

When the Research Unit receives a request for a report for consideration of an extension or re-designation of TPS, it is appropriate at that time to request the DOS Country Condition Report Addendum. This source will provide any relevant statistical updates that need to be incorporated into the Federal Register notice. The request to the Department of State is made with the understanding that the Research Unit can expect a 24-hour turnaround.

In the event that a given country does not receive TPS designation, the underlying report prepared by the RAIO Research Unit should not be posted to the ECN with any reference to 'TPS' in the title. This request has been made to the Research Unit by the TPS Working Group, particularly the OCC representative. In this case, the report may be branded as a country conditions report and then posted on the ECN. The report can then be utilized by the RAIO Asylum Division and Refugee Affairs Division as country of origin information in the analysis of whether or not an applicant has a claim to the possibility of 'other serious harm' in regards to the well-founded fear of persecution.

The USCIS Office of Policy & Strategy has reached an agreement with DOS on the subject of the addition of new data to our reports after they have been cleared by DHS HQ.

### Peer Review

The peer review process facilitates communication of suggestions, constructive criticism, and corrections, thereby ensuring that all work products meet the quality standards set forth by the RAIO Research Unit. All reports relating to Temporary Protected Status must undergo peer review prior to submission. During the peer review process, the reviewer will evaluate a colleague's research product, ensuring the following issues have been properly addressed:

Has the question been answered? Is the information presented relevant? Is the subject matter and specific issues adequately covered in the report?

Are the substance, style and presentation of information appropriate? Has the research product provided information in a neutral, objective manner? Are there any inconsistencies, bias or other deficiencies in the research product? Does the research product have a clear structure and layout?

Are grammar and spelling correct?

Are all sources correctly cited? Is every piece of information corroborated? Are there any omissions of or contradiction in key information from the source documents?

Does the response contain any personally identifiable information regarding the applicant that needs to be omitted?

## TPS Examples:

### NATURAL DISASTER

#### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing the natural disaster and breadth of damage caused by the disaster. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of reconstruction efforts.

#### 2. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the natural disaster such as deaths, injuries, disease outbreaks, and displacement

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 3. DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE

3-5 paragraphs describing infrastructure damaged by the natural disaster, such as roads, water, housing, transportation, and the breadth of damage throughout the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 4. DISRUPTION IN SERVICES

If necessary, 3-5 paragraphs describing damage to services not included in item 3 that may affect the country's ability to safely accept the return of its nationals.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 5. STATUS OF DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECONSTRUCTION

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

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### ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT

#### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing the conflict, including information on the parties involved, human rights violations, the scope of conflict, and the state of peace negotiations. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of changes in the conflict since the most recent designation or extension.

## 2. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the conflict, including casualties, human rights violations, displacement, and the sectors of society at risk of harm from the violence.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in security since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

## 3. SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

3-5 paragraphs describing the scope of the conflict, i.e., whether the conflict is concentrated in a region or is nation-wide and if the conflict places large segments of the population at risk.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in the conflict since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

## 4. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

3-5 paragraphs describing the status of peace talks, diplomatic negotiations, and any other change in circumstances that affects the prospects for nationals to safely return to the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on the progress of peace talks and changes in the security situation since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

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## EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY CONDITIONS

### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing conditions in the country. The summary should indicate the why the conditions in the country are extraordinary and whether these conditions are temporary in nature. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of changes in the country since the most recent designation or extension.

### 2. EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS

3-5 paragraphs describing the extraordinary nature of conditions in the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 3. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the extraordinary event(s), including deaths, disease outbreak, human rights violations, displacement, and any other relevant information.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes

since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 4. TEMPORARY NATURE OF CONDITIONS

3-5 paragraphs discussing whether conditions in the country are temporary in nature.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.
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## VI. Terrorist-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG)

Please see Appendix G: TRIG SOPs.

As part of USCIS's worldwide program of processing refugees for resettlement in the United States, each applicant who meets the definition of a refugee must subsequently be screened to determine whether or not any inadmissibility might apply that would bar entry into the United States. The reasons individuals are denied admission vary and can be found in INA section 212, codified as Title 8 of the U.S. Code, section 1182. Terrorism-related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG) exclude persons who have participated in various kinds of activity, including activity that is generally illegal and/or violent.

The USCIS Terrorist-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG) Working Group is chaired by the chief of the RAIO TRIG Branch. The TRIG working group meets quarterly with stakeholders to provide updates and statistics regarding the TRIG workload and for individual participants to raise TRIG-related questions and issues.

The TRIG Working Group, through the TRIG branch chief periodically sends requests to the RAIO Research Unit for a report on particular organizations that are referred to in one or more refugee/asylum applications. Upon receiving a query, the Research Unit prepares a report that was peer reviewed prior to submission to the TRIG Working Group. Although Research Unit Officers should have an understanding of what activities may meet the definition of a Tier III terrorist organization, the responsibility to determine whether or not any organization can be classified as a Tier III terrorist ultimately belongs to the OCC and the TRIG working group.

New procedures were introduced in September 2014. The OCC advised the Research Unit that TRIG research papers should utilize a word document watermark, or footer, indicating that the paper is "Pre-decisional /deliberative process protected." The OCC also advised that at the time of forwarding to the TRIG Working Group, these research papers should not be posted to any ECN page and should not be catalogued on the RAIO Library/EOS. It should be noted however, TRIG papers have been rebranded as COI research in the past under the RAIO Research format and posted to the ECN. Researchers' discretion is advised in converting TRIG research into general COI reports.

### Peer Review

The peer review process facilitates communication of suggestions, constructive criticism, and corrections, thereby ensuring that all work products meet the quality standards set forth by the RAIO Research Unit. All reports relating to Terrorist Related Inadmissibility Grounds must undergo peer review prior to submission. During the peer review process, the reviewer will evaluate a colleague's research product, ensuring the following issues have been properly addressed:

Has the question been answered? Is the information presented relevant? Is the subject matter and specific issues adequately covered in the report?

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Are the substance, style and presentation of information appropriate? Has the research product provided information in a neutral, objective manner? Are there any inconsistencies, bias or other deficiencies in the research product? Does the research product have a clear structure and layout?

Are grammar and spelling correct?

Are all sources correctly cited? Is every piece of information corroborated? Are there any omissions of or contradiction in key information from the source documents?

Does the response contain any personally identifiable information regarding the applicant that needs to be omitted?

## VII. Training and Videos

The RAI0 Research Unit conducts trainings on a recurring basis, forming a significant component of the unit's ongoing activities. There are primarily two trainings: Pre-departure Briefings for the RAI0 Refugee Affairs Division (RAD) circuit rides, and a Country of Origin Information Research (COIR) component for the RAI0 Combined Trainings. The Research Unit also regularly provides briefings for Asylum Offices on COI topics of relevancies to their caseloads. Other trainings may also be considered, if feasible. Historically, the Research Unit has conducted other trainings on occasion, such as training for staff of the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR).

### Pre-departure Briefings

The Research Unit staff member designated to provide an upcoming pre-departure briefing for a RAD circuit ride should confirm the date with the Desk Officer or Training Officer at RAD HQ. The trainer should communicate with RAD staff to collect available information about the population to be interviewed in order to prepare a presentation that addresses the specific needs of the circuit ride. The trainer should learn whether other presenters will address issues with the population(s) to be interviewed, and coordinate subject matter to avoid duplication. For focusing the content of the presentation, effective sources of information include:

1. The RAD ECN page
2. RAD Trip reports
3. Specific cases in the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) database (RAD staff can provide case numbers for scheduled interviews)
4. The 'Shared' drive and the 'Refugee' drive
5. Discussion with RAD desk officers at RAD-HQ, or the USCIS Field Office Director(s) whose office may be interviewing refugees of the caseload(s).

The trainer should prepare by conducting COI research as needed for the countries/groups/claims that will be seen on the circuit ride. The trainer should organize the material in a manner that will facilitate the best presentation possible, covering the main COI issues and anticipating possible issues and questions that could be encountered in the field after the interviews are underway. The training session will primarily be comprised of Refugee Officers and Supervisory Refugee Officers. A typical pre-departure briefing lasts from 1 to 2 hours, and is conducted at the RAD HQ at 111 Massachusetts Avenue NW.

### RAI0 Combined Trainings

The Research Unit presents a 2 to 2 ½ hour presentation on COIR as part of the RAI0 Combined Training (CT) program approximately four times per year. Participants primarily include new

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Asylum Officers, Refugee Officers, and IO Adjudicators, but also foreign visitors and other senior RAIO staff. The RU sends one or two researchers to conduct the face-to-face component of the training.

The Research Unit staff member designated to provide a Country of Origin Information Research (COIR) component for an upcoming RAIO Combined Training should confirm the date and location with the RAIO Training Branch, HQ. The Research Unit trainer will travel to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Georgia or other designated facility to conduct the face-to-face training. The trainer should coordinate all travel and administrative aspects of this trip directly with the RAIO Training Branch in HQ. For each CT program, RAIO Training typically provides a comprehensive guide to the CT program, including important dates, instructions, and information on logistics.

The CT program consists of a Distance Training (DT) component and a face-to-face component. The DT exercise is completed by participants as a self-study prior to the face-to-face session.

In preparing for the presentation, RU trainers should:

1. Review the most recent COIR CT Power Point presentation
2. Review the most recent DT exercise
3. Review the RAIO COIR Lesson Plan (This is a comprehensive document on COIR that participants should read prior to the DT exercise or face-to-face session.)
4. Discuss recent experiences and developments with RU staff who last led the COIR session
5. Review participant feedback for prior CT COIR sessions to identify possibilities for improvement
6. Watch the video of the prior CT COIR session (This is optional, but a means to identifying areas for improvement. Links to videos of prior CT COIR sessions may be obtained from RAIO Training)

RAIO Training has expressed the goal of using face-to-face time to apply the tools of COIR through exercises and discussion. RU trainers should limit class time spent on material that has already been addressed in the Lesson Plan and DT exercise, and instead build on the content of those items in the classroom through active engagement.

The Research Unit COIR session is intended to be an actively evolving program, and trainers are encouraged to update exercises with recent fact patterns, drawing on current events and resources. RU trainers are encouraged to provide input and their unique perspective. For example, contributing nuanced exercises that draw on the RU trainer's knowledge of his/her respective region and command of region-specific resources deepen the value of the program for participants.

Each trainer's overall goal is to provide the class with an applied experience and to develop direct skills which students can immediately apply in their work. Trainers should try to develop exercises that best afford practical experience in the classroom. This can be achieved by incorporating into the presentation a real-time introduction to the Research Unit ECN and to internet resources. An example of this approach would be to address regional common claims in

## Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Research Unit

the context of discussions involving the Encyclopedia of Internet Resources, the most comprehensive listing on the RU ECN page's Guides to Online Research and Internet Sources. The goal is to simultaneously point out useful resources and associated common claims.

It is critical that the trainer focuses upon the challenge of fostering class participation. Experience has shown that despite a discussion of the many resources available, trainers repeatedly have students ask for guidance on how to best conduct rapid research during pre-interview preparation. Thus, trainers should bear in mind the need for participants to locate relevant sources quickly and design exercises that develop this skill.

### Power Point Presentations and Handouts

Power Point presentations should clearly identify USCIS, RAIO, and the Research Unit as the source, such as using the standard USCIS seal. Material protected by copyright should be used only in a manner consistent with the relevant law. The format of a presentation is flexible, following the needs of the particular content. It is recommended to aim for clarity and consistency, such as using an opening slide with an outline of the content to be presented, and consistent fonts, colors, and organization. It is also recommended to limit the amount of text for each slide to that which is easily readable, and to use slide text as a guide to the discussion rather than a verbatim text of the content.

Power Point presentations may be used as a tool to provide participants with additional resources and reading. The notes section for each slide may contain links to internet resources and additional text.

Power Point presentations and all other training materials developed by the Research Unit for any training should be posted on the Research Unit's ECN page after conversion to *pdf* format. The *pdf* format should keep the entire Power Point presentation intact, including the notes associated with each slides.

### Videos

The Research Unit may create video presentations and panels for wider distribution, such as posting on the ECN. All videos produced by the Research Unit are required by law to include closed captions.

## VIII. Researching Country of Origin Information

### Collection Methods: Country of Origin Information

The RAIO Research Unit primarily relies on the following sources for the collection of Country of Origin information:

- (1) Major sources of human rights information such as those collected on UNHCR Refworld including, but not limited to:
  - a. U.S. Department of State
  - b. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, etc.
  - c. Reliable sources identified in reports prepared by COI researchers from other countries (IRB-Canada, U.K. Home Office, RRT-Australia, etc.)
- (2) Media reports
- (3) Information databases such as the Open Source Center or Jane's Terrorism & Insurgency Center
- (4) Academic studies found in peer reviewed journals or published by respected publishers
- (5) Consultations with experts

The RAIO EOS library is an online collection of publicly available documents containing county of origin information. The resources are drawn from a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental sources, including print and broadcast media, academic journals, human rights monitoring agencies, and refugee advocacy groups. The RAIO EOS library collection comprises approximately 55,000 electronic documents, covering the years 1991 to present. These documents are full text-searchable and are accessible from any RAIO computer. Additionally, the RAIO EOS library includes catalog records for approximately 20,000 hard copy resources primarily covering the years 1991 to 2006.

The RAIO physical library is located at 20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, where it houses hard copy resources throughout the RU office spaces on the third floor. These include subscriptions to several serials and other publications. In addition to hard copies of various reports that are routinely available on the internet, the physical library contains items that are not accessible on the internet, including human rights reports prior to 1990, academic journals, and book-length publications.

The Enterprise Collaboration Network (ECN) is a network used throughout USCIS. The RAIO Research Unit's ECN site comprises a searchable database of agency-published resources of county of origin information. It contains research publications from the RAIO Research Unit, including formal and informal query responses, region-specific information portals, research reports utilized for consideration of Temporary Protected Status for selected countries, training materials, and monthly new summaries.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) virtual library provides the Research Library and Information Services, which creates a framework of information resources and services that support DHS mission essential decision-making, intelligence, investigation, and research needs. The RAIO Research Unit is thus presented with online access to numerous commercial databases

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including Proquest News, Jane's Terrorism Intelligence Center, EBSCO, and LexisNexis.

The RAIO Research Unit routinely relies upon various internet research databases to collate country of origin information. Listings of these sources are located on the RAIO Research Unit's ECN site, labeled as "Encyclopedia of Internet Resources" and the Research Unit's "Online Resource Guide."

### **Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC)**

The Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) is an informal, non-decision making forum for intergovernmental information exchange and policy debate on issues of relevance to the management of international migratory flows. The IGC brings together 17 Participating States, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the European Commission. The Participating States are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.

RAIO Research Unit researchers are encouraged to make an effort to use the IGC site for review of country of origin information by querying colleagues in Europe. New RAIO Research Unit staff should request access by going to [www.igc.ch](http://www.igc.ch) and completing the application for IGC membership after reviewing the COI home page and general information. Notification will be sent when a membership account has been created.

### **ACCORD: Researching COI Information Training Manual** (2013 edition)

\*Note: the following sections reflect chapter summaries from the ACCORD training manual\*

#### **Role of COI**

COI is evidence in procedures for persons seeking international protection and supports decision-makers and legal advisors (RSD practitioners) in the assessment of an individual claim.

COI is used during the preparation of the interview, to examine the statement of the claimant and to support the assessment of future risk. It helps to answer questions related to protection and to credibility.

Not every event or situation in the country of origin makes its way to those involved in the procedure of international protection in the country of reception. The fact that no information on a specific incident or situation can be found does not automatically imply that the event did not happen or that the situation is not the case, nor does it necessarily undermine the truthfulness of the asylum-seeker's claim.

COI ends where guidance and decision-making begins. Risk assessment forms part of the duties of the decision-maker or the lawyer.

### **COI Quality Standards and Principles**

Quality standards for researching and using COI:

Relevance: COI used for deciding on international protection needs is relevant when it is based on questions rooted in legal concepts of refugee and human rights law or on questions derived from an applicant's statements.

Reliability and balance: Decisions on international protection needs should be based on COI from reliable sources, taking into account the source's political and ideological context as well as its mandate, reporting methodology and motivation. As each source has its own perspective and focus, different types of sources should be consulted to achieve the most comprehensive and balanced picture possible.

Accuracy and currency: Only information that is correct and valid at the time of making a decision should be used. Accuracy and currency can be achieved by cross-checking and corroborating information.

Transparency and traceability: To ensure transparency, COI should be fully referenced to enable readers to independently verify and assess the information. Every piece of information should be traceable to its source. Information should be clearly presented and its meaning must not be distorted.

Principles for researching and using COI:

Neutrality and impartiality: COI research should be conducted in a manner that is neutral with regard to the outcome. COI service providers should be impartial with regard to their clients.

Equality of arms regarding access to information: COI should be equally available to all decision-making bodies and to legal advisors of applicants in procedures for persons seeking international protection. Applicants must have access to the information a decision is based on, so that they may comment on it.

Public information: To support fair procedures, publicly available information should be used. Public information is open to review and scrutiny by the applicant, experts and the public at large.

Data protection: The personal data of a claimant and information that potentially may make the claimant identifiable must be protected and should never – directly or indirectly – be shared with the alleged persecutor.

### **(Research) Questions**

COI research must be informed by an understanding of international human rights law to lead to relevant results.

Protection-related questions can be systematically derived from legal concepts:

- o Convention grounds (persecution for political or religious reasons or for reasons of race, nationality, or belonging to a particular social group)
- o National law, domestic (or state) protection, persecution of non-state actors, internal protection alternative

Mainstreaming gender and vulnerability is a process of creating awareness of and knowledge about how gender or belonging to a vulnerable group influences living conditions and adds a specific dimension to many research questions.

### **Knowledge and assessment of Sources**

We distinguish between primary and secondary sources. While a primary source provides first-hand testimony or observation, a secondary source reproduces information originating from someone else.

Information is provided by different types of sources; such as international and intergovernmental organisations, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations as well as media and academia.

To be able to evaluate whether a source can be considered reliable, the source is assessed by a critical review of the following questions:

- Who provides the information?
- What information is provided?
- Why is the source providing this information?
- How is the information generated and presented?
- When was the information gathered and when was it provided?

Sources which do not provide sufficient information about their identity, their background, their motives or their methodology are considered “dubious”. Special care needs to be taken when dealing with dubious sources.

In order to build up a solid knowledge of sources, use selected lists of sources, check COI information systems, and keep track of sources you come across frequently and discuss them with your colleagues.

### **Research**

Cross-checking is the main instrument to achieve accuracy and currency. It is achieved by comparing and contrasting information from different sources and different types of sources. Cross-checking includes the aspects of corroborating, balancing, updating and specifying.

Information which is central to the question or which has an impact on a decision should be corroborated by using three different types of sources that independently provide information on the research issue at hand.

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Try to identify the primary source and trace information back as far as possible.

Do not ignore contradictory information for the sake of consistency.

Using a systematic research strategy helps to conduct COI research in a methodical, organized and structured manner and to produce accurate and current research results. A well thought out research strategy also helps to determine when to stop even in cases where no information could be found.

Make sure the question at hand is clear before starting the research process.

Use special care to cross-check statements made by dubious sources.

Avoid common cross-checking mistakes such as round-tripping and false corroboration.

### **Presentation**

Each piece of information has to be fully referenced and must be retrievable in both a decision and a COI product.

Information can be presented in a research product or in a decision by quoting, re-phrasing, summarizing or synthesizing.

When re-phrasing, summarizing or synthesizing, use neutral language, check expressions for potential bias and avoid distortions of the text.

Do not mingle factual information with (unmarked) expressions of opinion. When quoting an opinion, make sure to mark it as such and don't forget to indicate whose opinion it is.

Do not ignore information for the sake of consistency just because it does not fit into your picture or even contradicts the information you have already collected.

Information from non-text formats such as sound files, images or videos needs to be transcribed or to be described and properly documented.

Copies of all source material integrated into a decision or a COI product should be stored in your internal documentation system.

There are different models of quality control in COI units in place. The chapter highlighted peer review, external control and work division between a research and an editing unit.

### Department of State Country Report

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor:  
Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013, Appendix A: Notes on  
Preparation of Report

## Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Research Unit

The annual Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices are based on information available from a wide variety of sources, including U.S. and foreign government officials; victims of human rights abuse; academic and congressional studies; and reports from the press, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with human rights. The Department finds particularly helpful the role of NGOs, whether within a single country or those that have an international perspective. We cite NGO reports frequently within the Country Reports. While much of the information used is already public, information on particular abuses frequently cannot be attributed, for obvious reasons, to specific sources. The Department of State does not use sources or information it believes lack credibility.

The Country Reports cover respect for human rights in foreign countries and territories worldwide. They do not purport to assess human rights implications of actions taken by the U.S. government or its representatives.

To comply with the congressional requirement for the reporting of human rights practices, the Department provides guidance to U.S. diplomatic missions in August for submission in September and October of draft reports, which the Department updates by year's end. A wide spectrum of concerned offices in the Department of State provides contributions, and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor prepares a final draft.

The report does not reflect developments that become known after the end of the calendar year. However, in the introduction to the reports, the Department may refer to major events or significant trends after the close of the calendar year.

The Department attempts to make the reports comprehensive, objective, and uniform in both scope and quality. We seek a high standard of consistency in the reports despite the multiplicity of sources and diversity of the countries, while emphasizing flexibility in style in the interest of readability. Streamlining begun with the 2011 reports reduced the number of reported abuses cases and extensive follow-up on old but open abuses cases. In the years since, the Reports select a few illustrative examples of abuse and adopt follow-up only on the previous year's high-profile open abuse cases.

Evaluating the credibility of reports of human rights abuses is difficult. Most governments and opposition groups deny that they commit human rights abuses and sometimes go to great lengths to conceal evidence of such acts. There may be few eyewitnesses to specific abuses. Frequently, eyewitnesses are intimidated or prevented from reporting what they know. On the other hand, individuals and groups opposed to a government may have incentive to exaggerate or fabricate abuses. In similar fashion, some governments may distort or exaggerate abuses attributed to opposition groups. The Department has sought to identify those groups (for example, government forces) or individuals who all the evidence available indicates have committed human rights or other abuses. Many governments that profess to oppose human rights abuses in principle may in fact secretly order or tacitly condone abuses or may lack the will or ability to control those responsible for abuses. Consequently, in judging a government's policy, the reports look beyond statements of policy or intent and examine what a government actually has done to prevent human rights abuses, including the extent to which it investigates, brings to trial, and appropriately punishes those who commit abuses.

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The Department has continued the effort from previous years to cover human rights problems affecting women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people. The appropriate section of each country report discusses abuses targeted specifically against women (for example, rape or other violence perpetrated by governmental or organized opposition forces, or discriminatory laws or regulations). In Section 6, the reports discuss socioeconomic discrimination; discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS; societal violence against women, children, the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, persons with disabilities, or ethnic minorities; and the efforts, if any, of governments to combat these problems.

## IX. Citation

Please see Appendix H: for Uniform Citation Guidelines

The RAIIO Research Unit has developed a Uniform Citation Guide derived from *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*. (Now in its 19th edition, *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* prescribes the most widely used system within the United States for citing to legal documents. The Bluebook, as it is often referred, is compiled and published by the Harvard Law Review Association, the Columbia Law Review, the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, and the Yale Law Journal).

The Research Unit's uniform citation guide has been designed for use by any USCIS components, including the Research Unit and Immigration Officers. The guide is also intended for use in the preparation of written reports for the Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG) Working Group. The guide is very streamlined but covers the types of citations required by the aforementioned users. The guide explains three basic rules, with supporting examples, including instructions on how to complete short-form citations. [See Appendix H: Uniform Citation Guide.]

## X. Administrative Guidance

Teleworking is an option for RAIIO Research Unit Officers. New Officers need to complete a designated period of time before they may choose this option. All staff who telework should maintain their schedule on the 'RU Calendar' which can be accessed from the home page of the RAIIO Research Unit's ECN site. Each Officer is responsible for updating any changes in his/her teleworking schedule, be it a one-time change or a recurring change. All staff should be in the office on the day of the weekly staff meeting.

Additionally, the 'RU Calendar' should be updated by all RAIIO Research Unit staff to record any leave time, as well as any outside meetings, trainings and presentations.

All RAIIO Research Unit staff should attend a session of the Emergency Preparedness Training, when available. The training is offered periodically by the Emergency Management Coordinator. The 30-minute sessions cover Continuity of Operations (COOP); Emergency Preparedness; Emergency Notification; Active Shooter; and Occupant Emergency Evacuation Plans.

### New Staff Orientation

Orientation is comprised of meeting with the RU's Researchers and RAIIO offices such as RAD, TRIG, Asylum, Training, EOS, and OP&S. This orientation is conducted in an effort to get the new staff member acquainted with how the RAIIO Research Unit operates, to teach the new staff member what resources are at their disposal, and advise them as to how to succeed in their work in the Research Unit. The new staff member will be assigned an Orientation Coordinator who will guide the new staff member through orientation and develop/coordinate an orientation schedule.

The most important part of the orientation is meeting with the other Researchers, as they provide a wealth of knowledge and experience in working in the RAIIO Research Unit. This is to include teleworking Researchers. Meetings with teleworking staff are a key part of the orientation, but due to their limited available office time, these meetings should be scheduled on a flexible case-by-case basis. The Orientation Coordinator should assist the new staff in arranging meetings with all Researchers. These could take the form of general discussions of RU practices or could focus on specific tasks -- such as query responses or briefings -- performed by the RU.

The orientation period usually lasts about two weeks, but this is dependent on scheduling contingencies. Outside office visits and meetings that cannot be accommodated in the 2-week schedule can be scheduled outside of the two week timeframe. The new staff member should set aside time to meet everyone on the team individually in order to share advice on 'best practices' and to be exposed to the various approaches to the Research Unit's work.

Outside meetings are designed to put get the new staff member physically acquainted with other offices. These meetings will help staff become acquainted with other office staff members, will provide a brief overview of other units/positions, and will contribute to an understanding of how RU interacts with these various offices. Whenever possible,

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new staff should be accompanied by RU staff on outside meetings in order to facilitate the conversation, and pose questions.

## XI. Panels, Presentations, Consultations and Meetings

On occasion, the RAIO Research Unit schedules and coordinates presentations by guest speakers. On July 10, 2014 the RU hosted the panel discussion, “*Northern Triangle: Gangs, Organized Crime, and Migration.*” In addition to live attendance at the Tomich Center at 111 Massachusetts Avenue NW, interested parties were able to participate remotely via telephone or videoconference. Since participation by telephone was limited to 50 callers, the Research Unit encouraged the great number of interested callers to consolidate all colleagues at any office to place a single call in order to maximize the reach of the call-in option.

Whenever the Research Unit has a new research product of relevance to the asylum division, the author of a particular product should briefly introduce it on the next periodic Asylum Division QA/T conference call.

Historically, the Research Unit has utilized outside experts on particular research products. This practice continues to be an option, on an as-needed basis. The Research Unit also has a working relationship with the Law Library of Congress (LLOC). They occasionally provide legal research for questions of foreign law using foreign open source materials located in the collection of the Library of Congress or located in any foreign countries which make such sources available.

The Research Unit participates in several periodic meetings. The RU Chief, or a representative, attends the bi-weekly RAIO Management Team meeting in person. Other meetings are routinely handled on a call-in basis, and include the Asylum Division QA/T conference call; the TPS Working Group meetings; the TRIG Working Group meetings. The RU chief represents USCIS in the Country of Origin Information (COI) working group of the IGC, which usually meets in Geneva, Switzerland.

## Appendix A: Query Response Template Guide

### Query Response Guide Template

All formal query responses should be presented to the requestor in the query response template, located in the shared drive. The appropriate Researcher processing the query response must properly complete the fields of the Query template.

**Title:** Insert the Query Response Title in the top section of the template. Title should describe what information the query contains. Researchers should use their best judgement on naming queries.

In the Query Response title, the introductory phrase “Information on” before the description of the subject to which the Query Response pertains indicates to the reader that the response provides information on the topic, but that the response is not an exhaustive treatment of the topic.

“Information on” is followed by a brief generalized summary of the Query Response content and not a restating of the detailed query. When formulating this part of the title, keep in mind the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of the query, and avoid unnecessary terms such as “applicant” (all requests involve applicants or respondents) and legal terms such as “persecution” / “persecutor”, “credible”, “terrorist activity”.

Example: Guinea: Information on Marriage Laws and Traditional Marriages

The query was: “Please provide information about marriage laws in Guinea, particularly information on government recognition of traditional marriages. What procedures, if any, must be undertaken to document such a marriage with the government?”

The title of the Query Response, which is also the text in the Subject field of the Query Response template, is an abbreviated summary of the query.

**Date:** Insert the date that the query was formalized and distributed using the format: Day Month Year.

Example: 25 May 2015

**Question/Query:** Insert the Question or Questions that will be answered in the Query Response in the highlighted blue section of the template.

**Originating Office:** Below the blue highlighted question box, fill in the information regarding the office in which the Query originated.

This field remains consistent in all query responses.

**Query:** If the requestor has not succinctly stated his or her query, the Researcher must formulate the country conditions question objectively from the information provided in the

request.

Example: Please provide information about marriage laws in Guinea, particularly information on government recognition of traditional marriages. What procedures, if any, must be undertaken to document such a marriage with the government?

The query above was formulated from the following text from the requestor: “I’m looking for the position of the Guinean (Republic of Guinea, capital Conakry) government on traditional (tribal) marriages. We have an asylum seeker who claims she is married, but there is no documentation to verify. Does the Guinean government officially recognize such marriages? Is such a union valid in Guinea? Do Guinean statutes recognize such marriages?”

**Query Response**: The text of the query response is provided in this field, and sources should be referenced using footnotes and formatted according to the Research Unit Uniform Citation Guide.

Example: *All According to Plan: The Rab'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt*, Human Rights Watch. August 15, 2014.

The final paragraph in the text of the query response is the following disclaimer:

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Unit within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

## Appendix B: Formal Query Template



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

**Refugee, Asylum and  
Int'l Operations  
Research Unit**

[Insert Title]  
[Insert Date]

*[Insert Question/query]*

This query request originated from [Insert Office Location], RAIIO, USCIS.

[Topic Header—i.e. Background, Overview]

[Paragraph Body/ Response]

[2<sup>nd</sup> Subject Header—i.e Group Name/Problem]

[2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph Body/ Response]

[Ect.]

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RAIIO Research Unit within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

## Appendix C: Contacting an Expert Draft Email

From: [Last name, First name] [<mailto:Firstname.Lastname@uscis.dhs.gov>]

Sent: Wednesday, [Date, Time]

To: [Expert and/or Organization]

Subject: [Country] inquiry: [Group/s involved]

[Expert and/or Organization]

Good afternoon,

My name is [insert name] and I work for the Research Unit of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Department of Homeland Security. The Research Unit is responsible for conducting open-source country-of-origin (COI) research for the asylum and refugee programs of USCIS. I am currently conducting research on [Country name]. More specifically, I am conducting research into [insert involved group and/or subject]. I am aware that the [Expert and/or organization] has a great reputation and expertise. We were hoping [x person] or someone from your staff could assist us with research by giving an expert opinion or by pointing us in the right direction regarding a recent inquiry.

The main questions we would like assistance with are as follows:

- 1 [Insert specific question]
- 2 [Insert additional follow on questions as needed]

Should your office have any concerns about sharing information with the Research Unit, we'd like to assure that any information provided would not be used in publicly available materials without first obtaining permission. Any assistance your office might be able to provide would be greatly appreciated.

Very Respectfully,

**[Researchers Name]**

COI Researcher Research Unit

USCIS Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate

Office: 202-xxx-xxxx Email: <mailto:Firstname.Lastname@uscis.dhs.gov>

20 Massachusetts Ave NW Washington, DC 20529

## Appendix D: Permission to Cite Draft Email

From: [Last name, First name] [<mailto:Firstname.Lastname@uscis.dhs.gov>]  
To: [Email address of expert who provided assistance and/or Organization]  
Subject: [Seeking permission to cite in response to query]

Dear [Expert and/or Organization]

Good afternoon,

I want to thank you very much for your prompt and helpful reply. There is just one thing I want to clear with you before passing on this information to our field staff in the form of a RAIO RU Query Response. Is it permissible to cite you as the source?

The asylum program relies only on publicly available information when assessing country-of-origin information and, therefore, we can only use information that is clearly sourced. Therefore, before you agree to be cited, I want to make you aware that our Query Response to the field office could be made publicly available in a number of ways. Additionally, all Query Responses are made available to USCIS personnel on our ECN (Enterprise Collaboration Network) page. It should be noted that any asylum applicant could have access to any RAIO RU Query Responses that is used in arriving at a decision in his or her individual case through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, in RAIO RU Query Responses, if it is preferred by the source we can cite you by title and/or organization rather than by name, although we do keep the names of our sources in our RAIO RU files. Rest assured, we do not share personal information such as telephone numbers, addresses, or email addresses of sources with field staff or the public.

I have attached the draft Query Response and highlighted the area in which you are cited. Please let me know if I have represented the information you presented accurately and whether, you agree to being cited, how you would like to be cited (i.e. by name or organization). If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks again for your help. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Very Respectfully,

[Researchers Name]

COI Researcher Research Unit

USCIS Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate

Office: 202-xxx-xxxx Email: <mailto:Firstname.Lastname@uscis.dhs.gov>

20 Massachusetts Ave NW Washington, DC 20529

## Appendix E: News Summary Template



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

RAIO Research Unit

### News Summary Bulletin: March 2017



A COMPILATION OF ARTICLES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS BY THE RAIO RESEARCH UNIT.



**Subscribe**

Not on the list? Receive the Monthly  
News Summary Bulletin by [subscribing](#)  
[today](#).

**FEATURED RESEARCH UNIT  
PRODUCTS:**

[\[List Hyper-linked RU  
Products by Title\]](#)

**HOT TOPICS**

[Regional Heading]

[Country Name]

[Article Title]

[Name of Publication—Date of Publication]

[Write a brief summary of the article using original language. Please try  
to keep your summation between two to four sentences in length.

*See also:* [Article Title](#), Name of Publication – Date of Publication.]

Examples:

*In the past month the following articles have been posted as breaking news on the RAIIO Research Unit's ECN home page under HOT TOPICS:*

[\[Insert Hyper-linked Articles by Title\]](#)

#### RAIO Library

Visit [RAIO Library \(EOS\)](#), a centralized historical database with a user-friendly search engine where you will find additional research resources.

DOJ's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section provided [news](#) of unlawful citizenship by a member of the Bosnian Army

## ASIA

### China

#### Xinjiang's Rapidly Evolving Security State

Jamestown Foundation – March 14, 2017

Data collected through public service postings in China reveal a massive spike in police recruitment since 2012. In part, this is an exercise in catching up with wealthier, coastal regions, but over time, the target sharpened to focus on sources of unrest in remote, chiefly Uyghur, parts of Southern Xinjiang.

### Nepal

#### Investigation urgently needed after security forces shoot protesters dead

Amnesty International – March 7, 2017

Supporters of the Samyukta Loktrantrik Madhesi Morcha (SLMM) gathered to protest against an election rally of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) party. The SLMM, an alliance of Madhes based parties, are boycotting the election as no changes have been made to the constitution. There were clashes between protesters and the security forces policing the rally. Some of the protesters allegedly threw stones and other objects at the security forces, who then fired tear gas grenades and used firearms against them.

## Appendix F: TPS Templates by Category

TPS CONSIDERATIONS: [COUNTRY AND DATE]

### ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT

#### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing the conflict, including information on the parties involved, human rights violations, the scope of conflict, and the state of peace negotiations. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of changes in the conflict since the most recent designation or extension.

#### 2. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the conflict, including casualties, human rights violations, displacement, and the sectors of society at risk of harm from the violence.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in security since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 3. SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

3-5 paragraphs describing the scope of the conflict, i.e., whether the conflict is concentrated in a region or is nation-wide and if the conflict places large segments of the population at risk.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in the conflict since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 4. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

3-5 paragraphs describing the status of peace talks, diplomatic negotiations, and any other change in circumstances that affects the prospects for nationals to safely return to the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on the progress of peace talks and changes in the security situation since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

TPS CONSIDERATIONS: [COUNTRY AND DATE]

## NATURAL DISASTER

### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing the natural disaster and breadth of damage caused by the disaster. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of reconstruction efforts.

### 2. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the natural disaster such as deaths, injuries, disease outbreaks, and displacement

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 3. DAMAGE TO INFRASTRUCTURE

3-5 paragraphs describing infrastructure damaged by the natural disaster, such as roads, water, housing, transportation, and the breadth of damage throughout the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 4. DISRUPTION IN SERVICES

If necessary, 3-5 paragraphs describing damage to services not included in item 3 that may affect the country's ability to safely accept the return of its nationals.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 5. STATUS OF DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECONSTRUCTION

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on improvement or deterioration of conditions described previously in this section.

TPS CONSIDERATIONS: [COUNTRY AND DATE]

## EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY CONDITIONS

### 1. SUMMARY

Five to seven sentences describing conditions in the country. The summary should indicate the why the conditions in the country are extraordinary and whether these conditions are temporary in nature. If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of changes in the country since the most recent designation or extension.

### 2. EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS

3-5 paragraphs describing the extraordinary nature of conditions in the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 3. POPULATION HARMED

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the extraordinary event(s), including deaths, disease outbreak, human rights violations, displacement, and any other relevant information.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 4. TEMPORARY NATURE OF CONDITIONS

3-5 paragraphs discussing whether conditions in the country are temporary in nature.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

TPS CONSIDERATIONS: [COUNTRY AND DATE]

ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT / EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY

## CONDITIONS

### 1. SUMMARY

--as it relates to Ongoing Armed Conflict

Five to seven sentences describing the conflict, including information on the parties involved, human rights violations, the scope of conflict, and the state of peace negotiations.

--as it relates to Extraordinary and Temporary Conditions

Five to seven sentences describing conditions in the country. The summary should indicate the why the conditions in the country are extraordinary and whether these conditions are temporary in nature.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, the summary should include a synopsis of changes in the country since the most recent designation or extension.

### 2. POPULATION HARMED

--as it relates to Ongoing Armed Conflict

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the conflict, including casualties, human rights violations, displacement, and the sectors of society at risk of harm from the violence.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in security since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

--as it relates to Extraordinary and Temporary Conditions

3-5 paragraphs describing harm caused by the extraordinary event(s), including deaths, disease outbreak, human rights violations, displacement, and any other relevant information.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 3. SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

3-5 paragraphs describing the scope of the conflict, i.e., whether the conflict is concentrated in a region or is nation-wide and if the conflict places large segments of the population at risk.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes in the conflict since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

### 4. EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY CONDITIONS

--as it relates to Extraordinary Conditions

3-5 paragraphs describing the extraordinary nature of conditions in the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

--as it relates to Temporary Conditions

3-5 paragraphs discussing whether conditions in the country are temporary in nature.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on changes since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

#### 5. PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

3-5 paragraphs describing the status of peace talks, diplomatic negotiations, and any other change in circumstances that affects the prospects for nationals to safely return to the country.

If this is a review of a country already designated for TPS, include information on the progress of peace talks and changes in the security situation since the most recent update on the country.

- Sub-bullets as necessary.

[Blank Template]

TPS [Country]

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS CONSIDERATIONS: [Country – Month Day,  
Year]

ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT / EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY CONDITIONS  
(Covering events since [Date])

SUMMARY

SCOPE OF THE CONFLICT

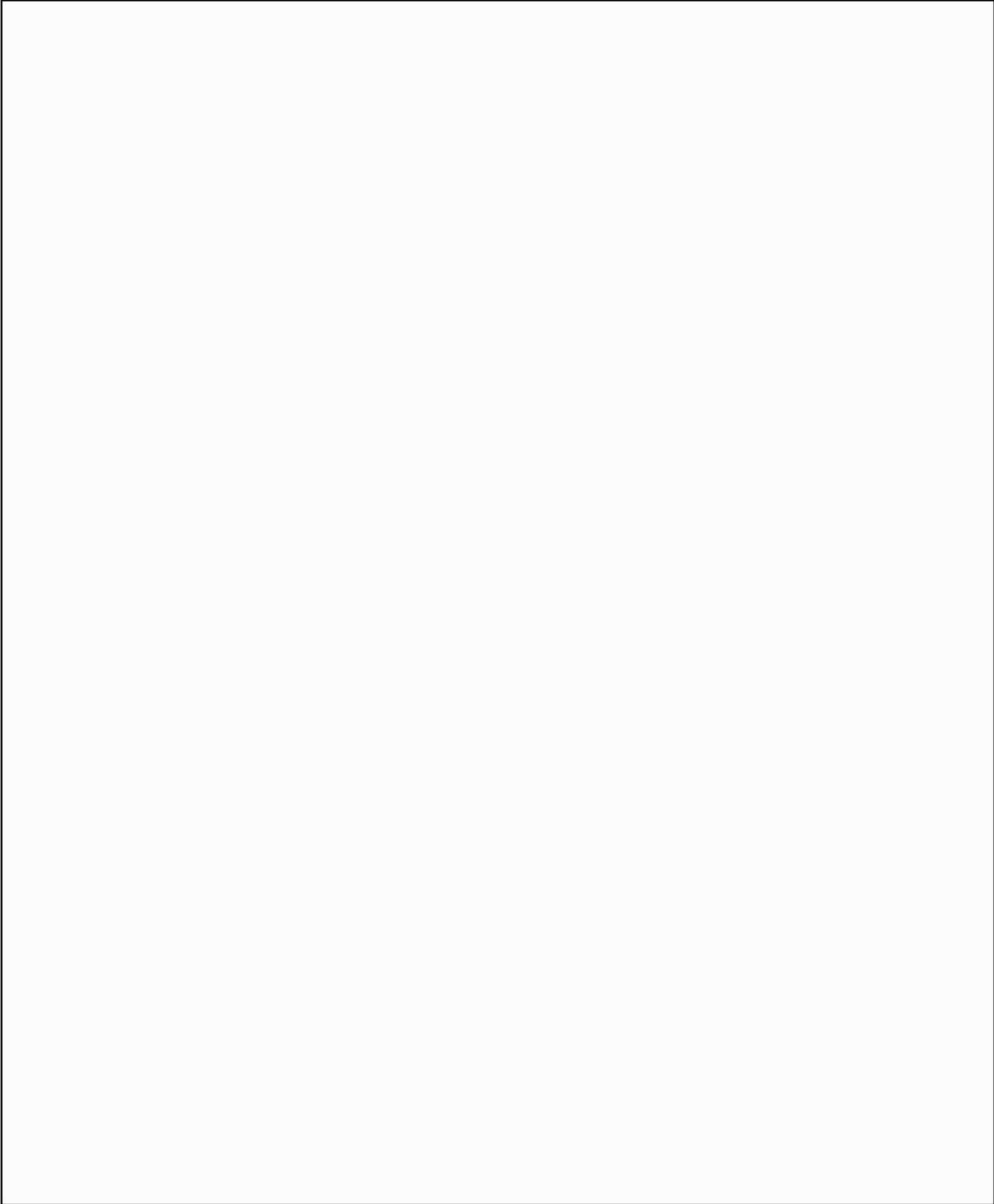
[Cities, province, region]

CONCLUSION

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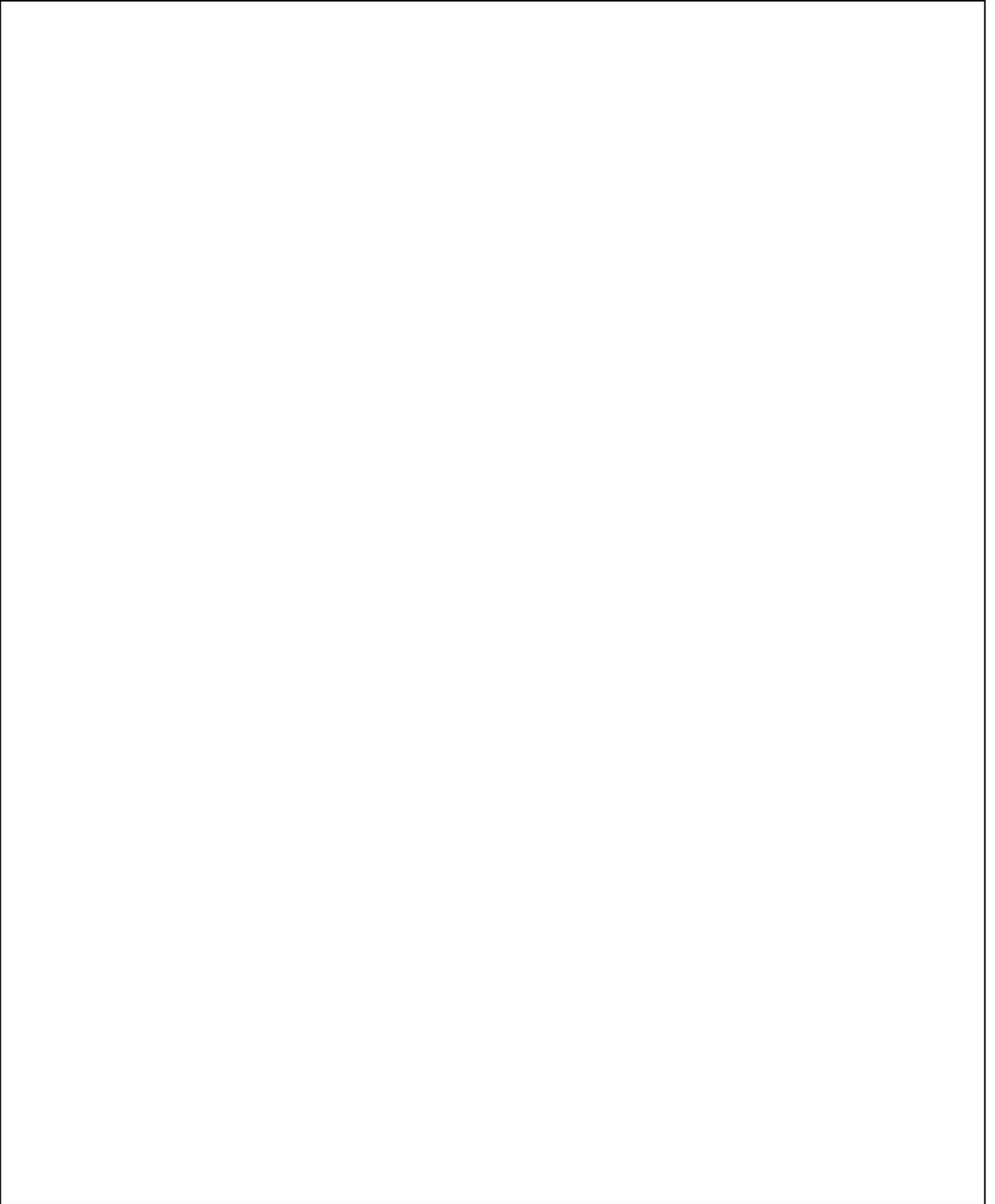
Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit

## Appendix G: TRIG SOPs



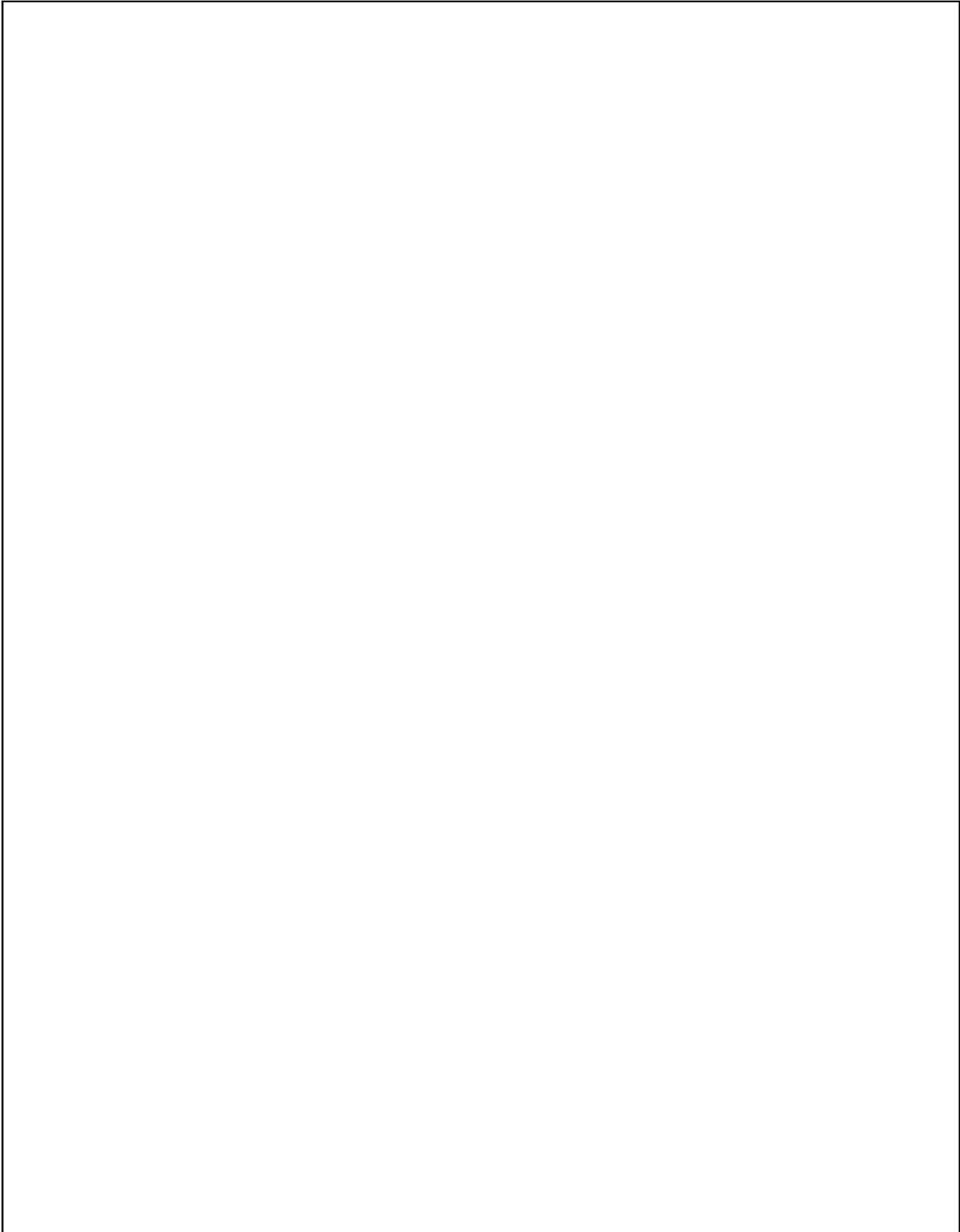
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations



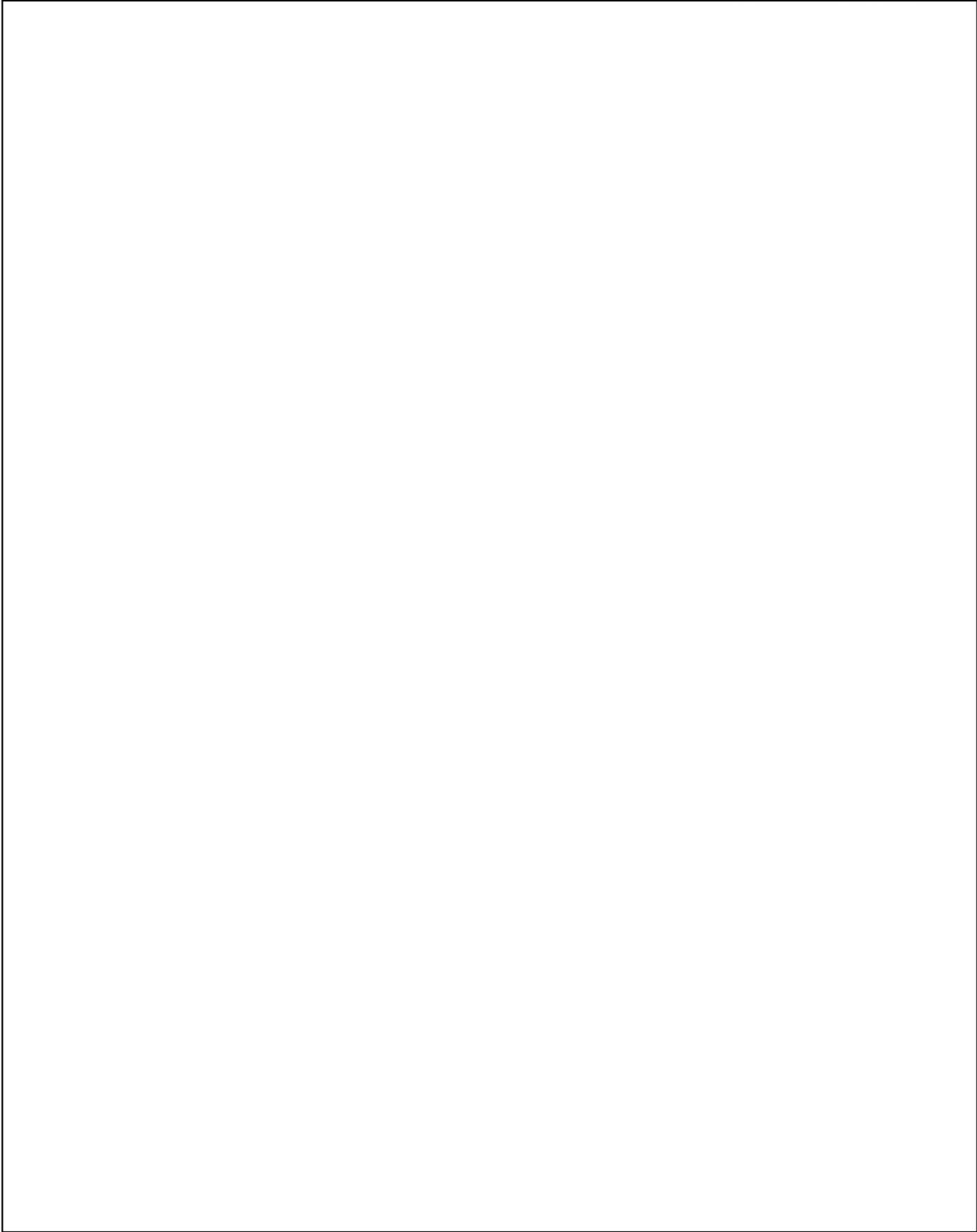
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



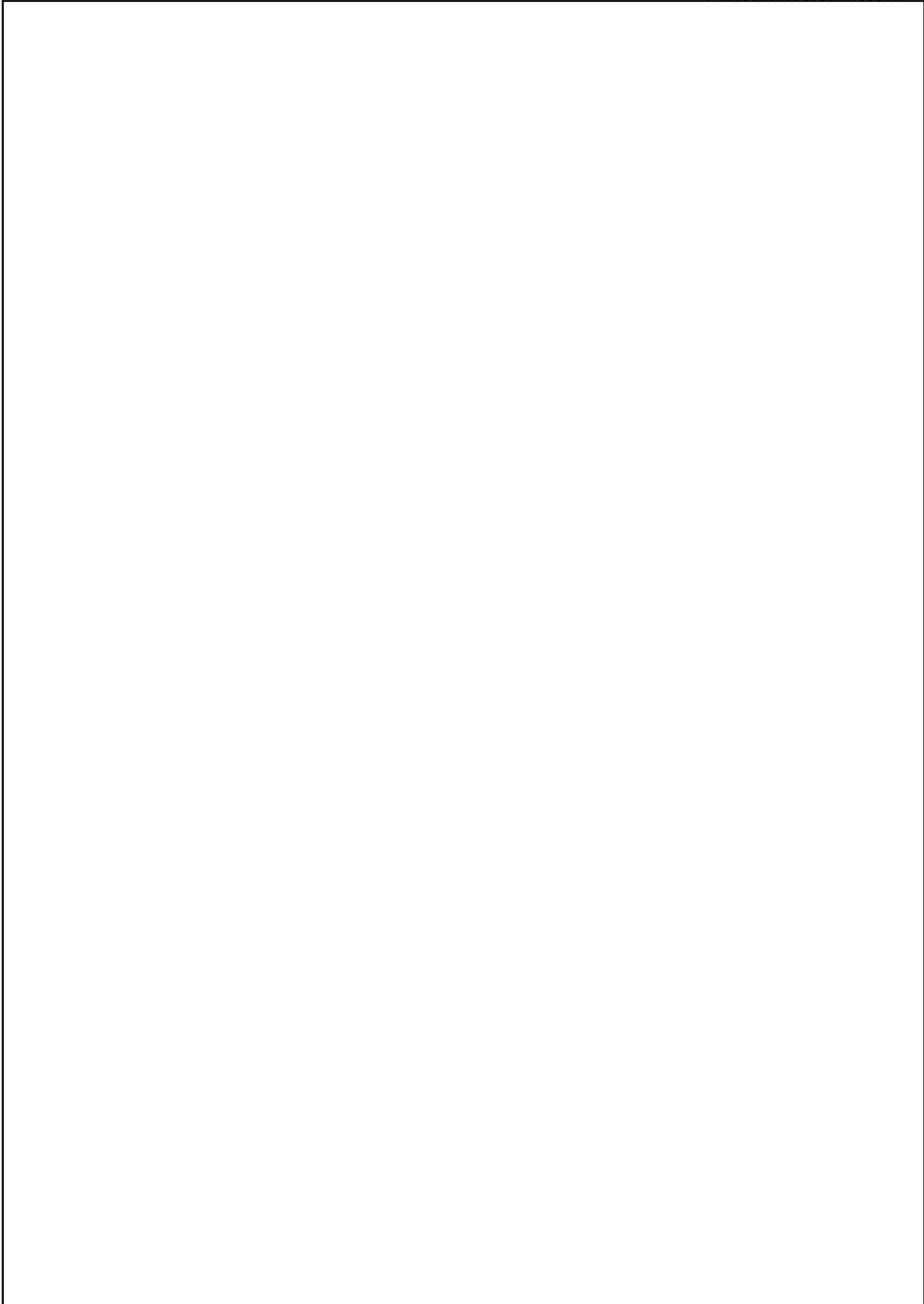
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations



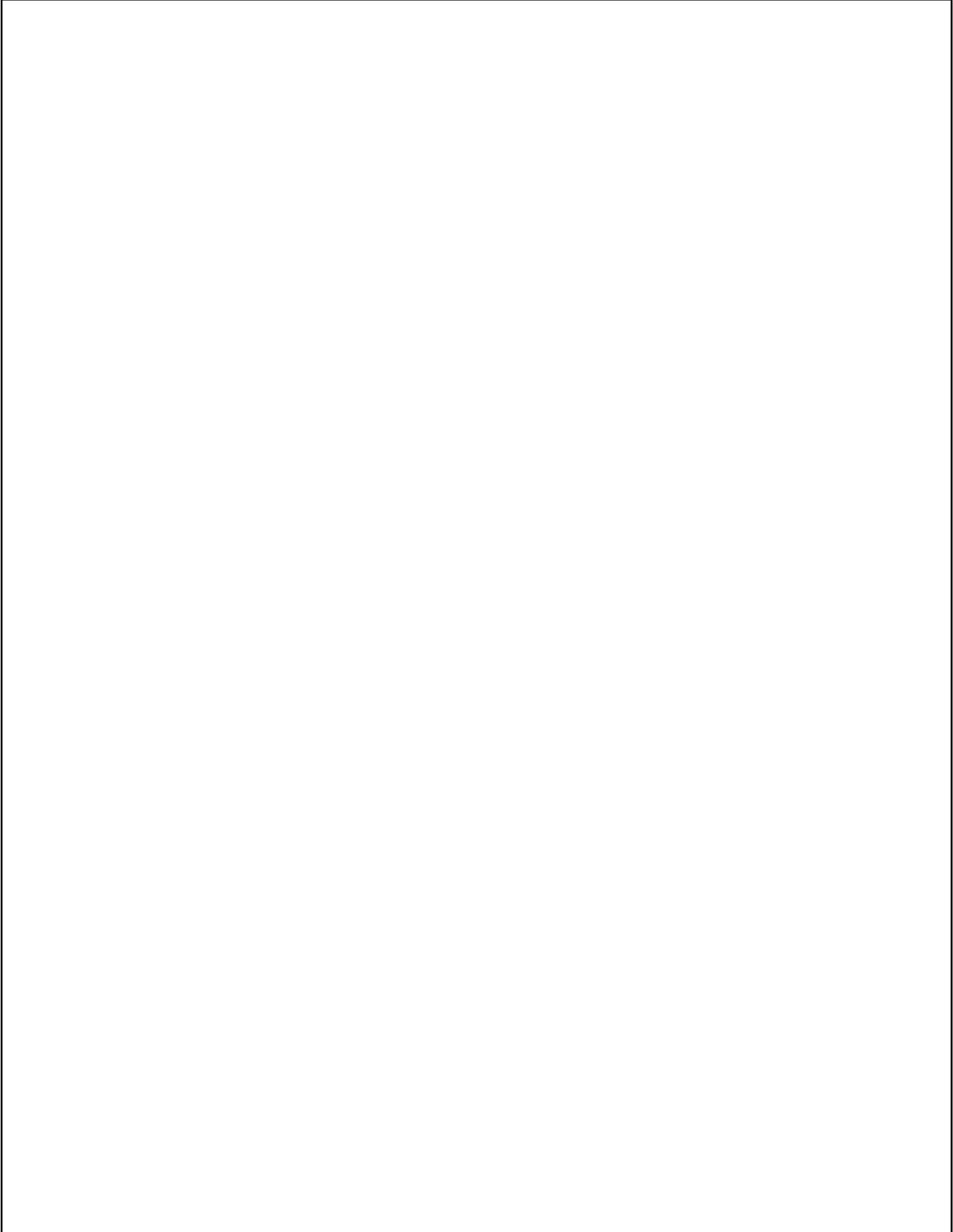
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



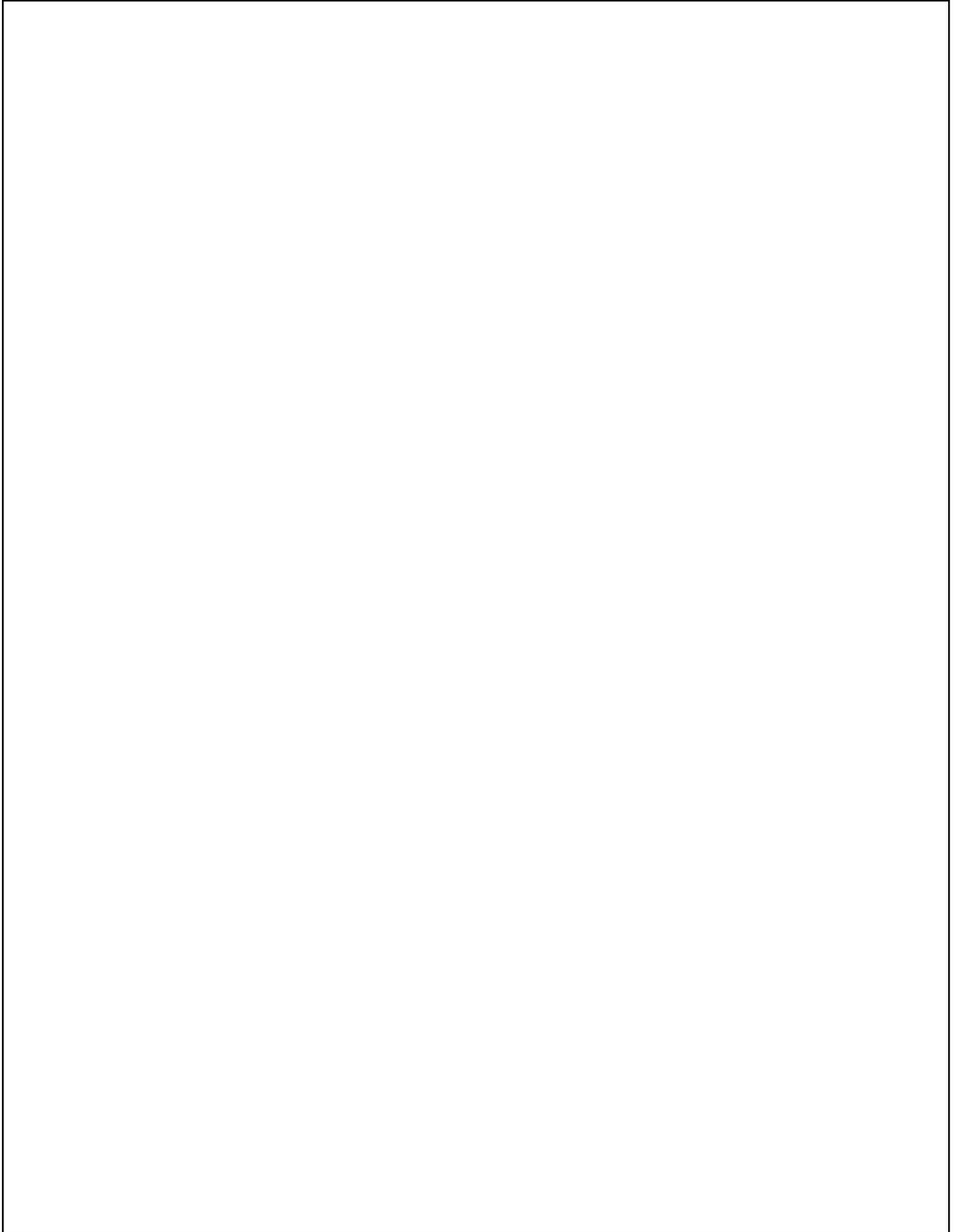
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



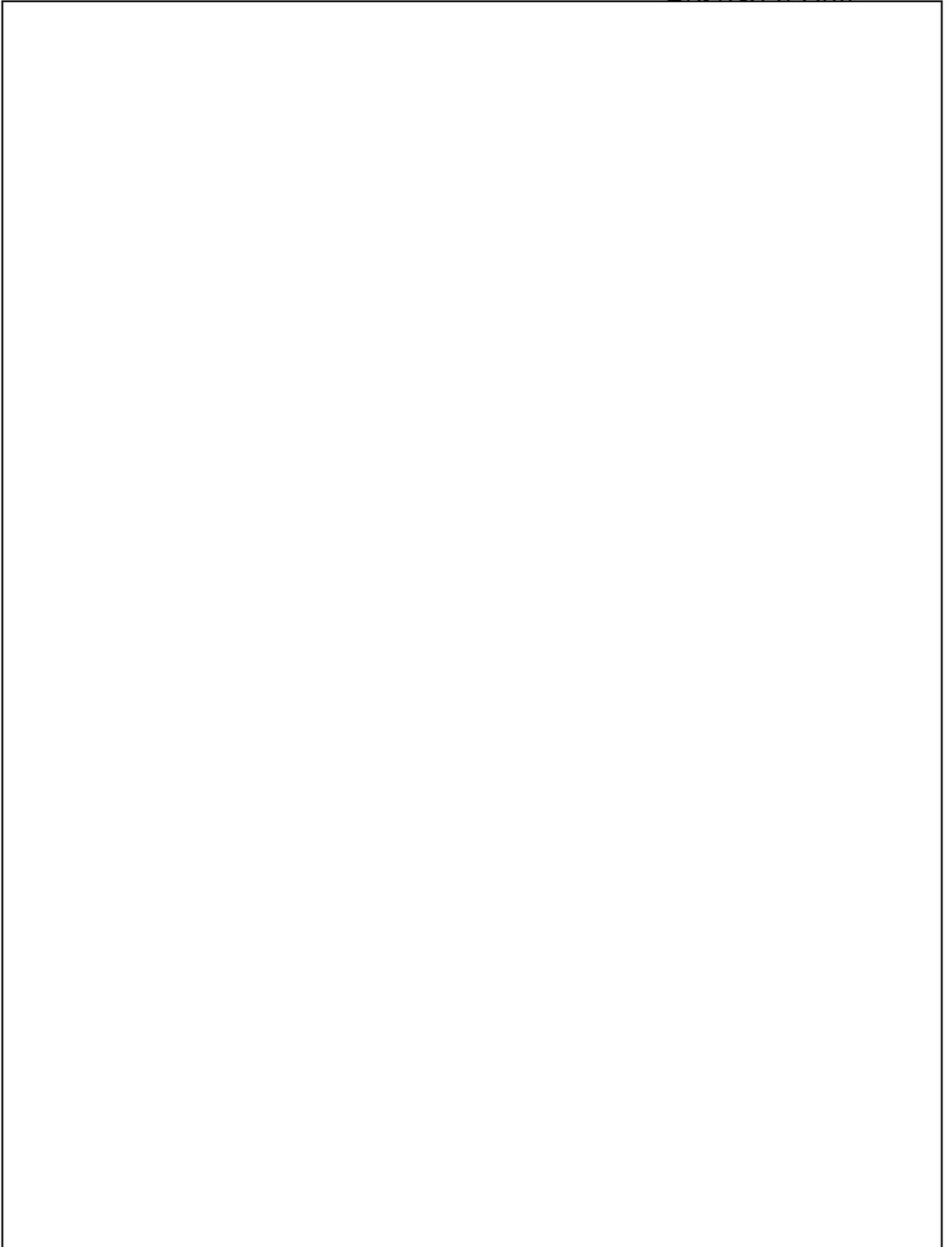
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations



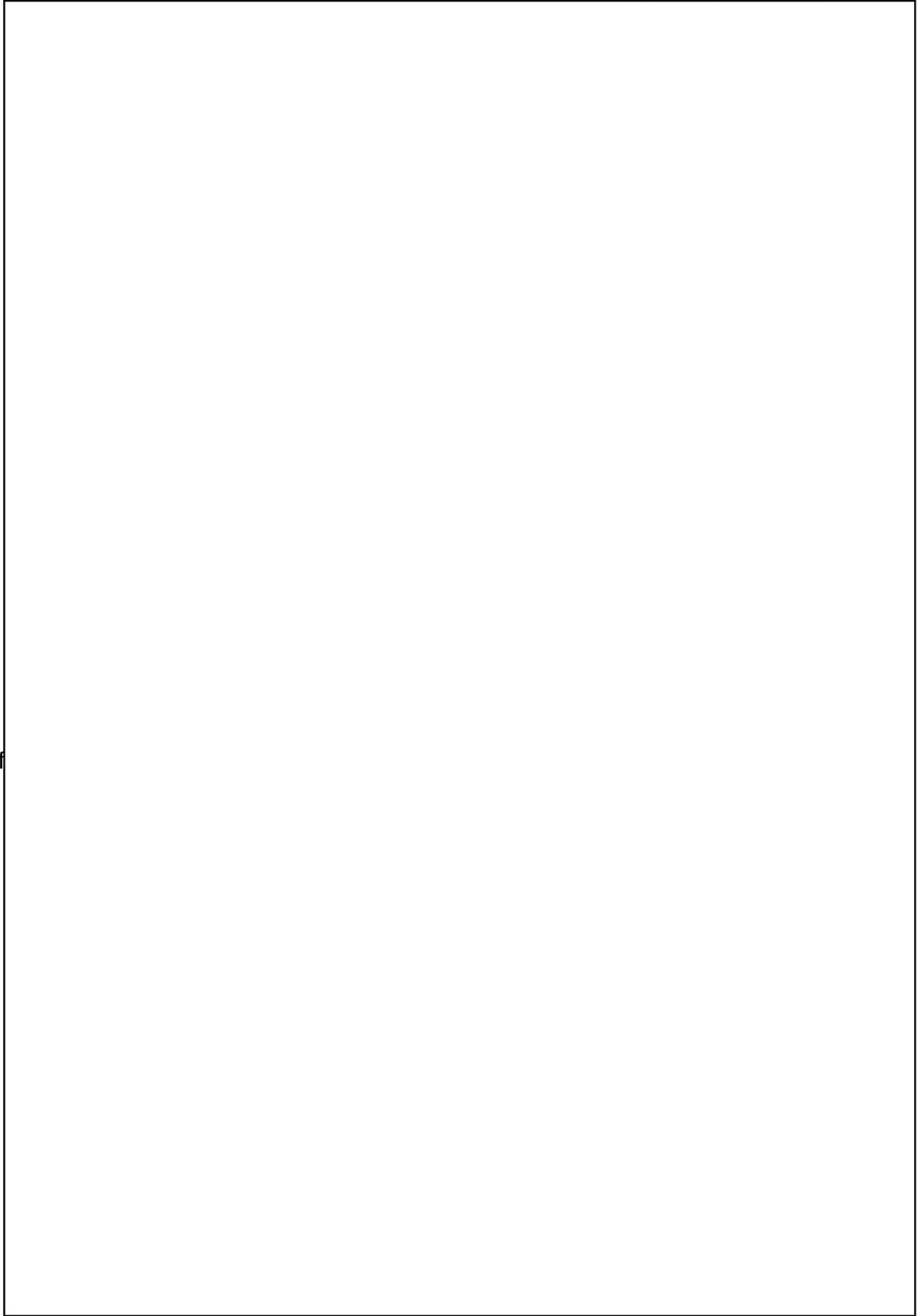
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



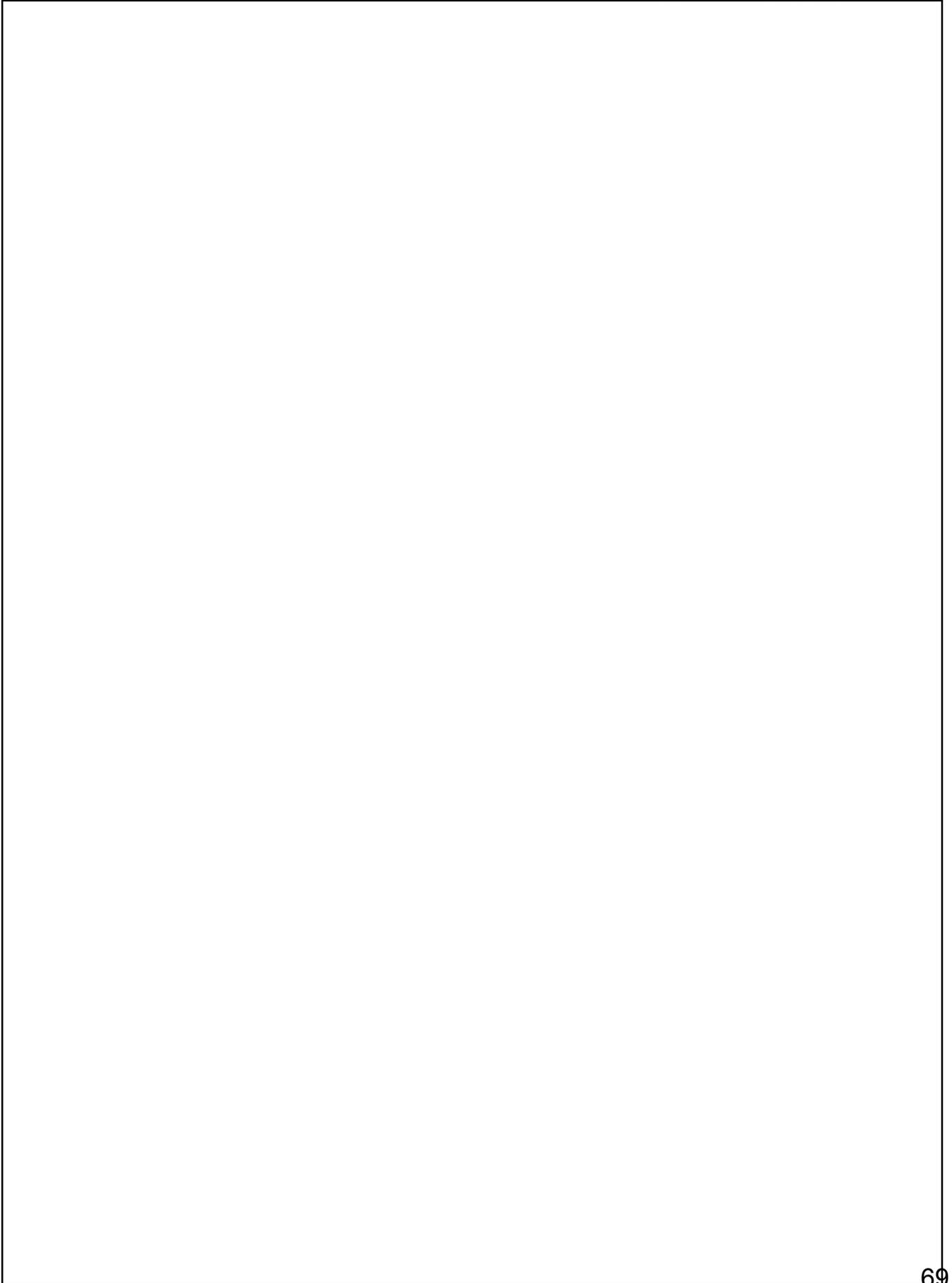
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



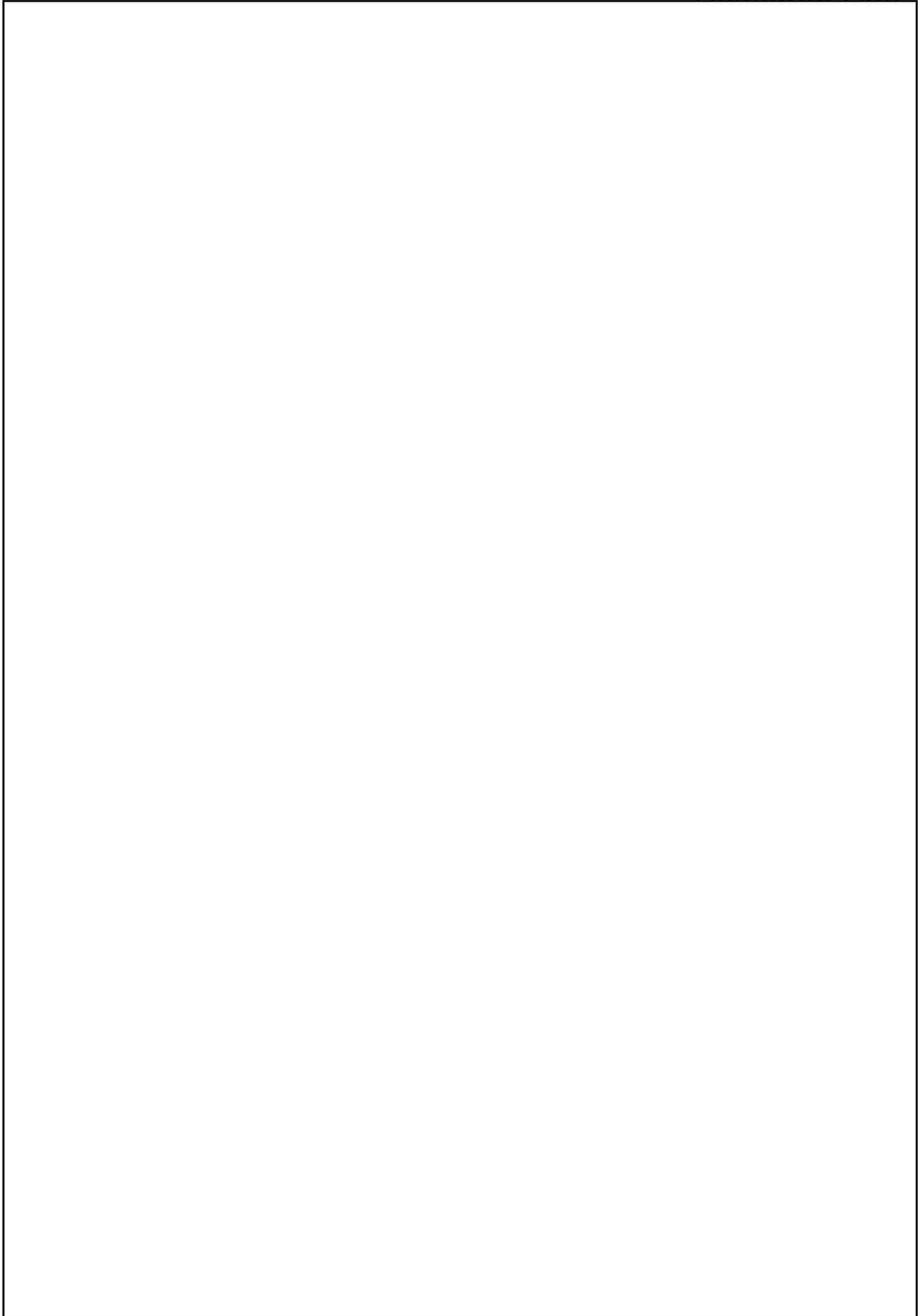
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations



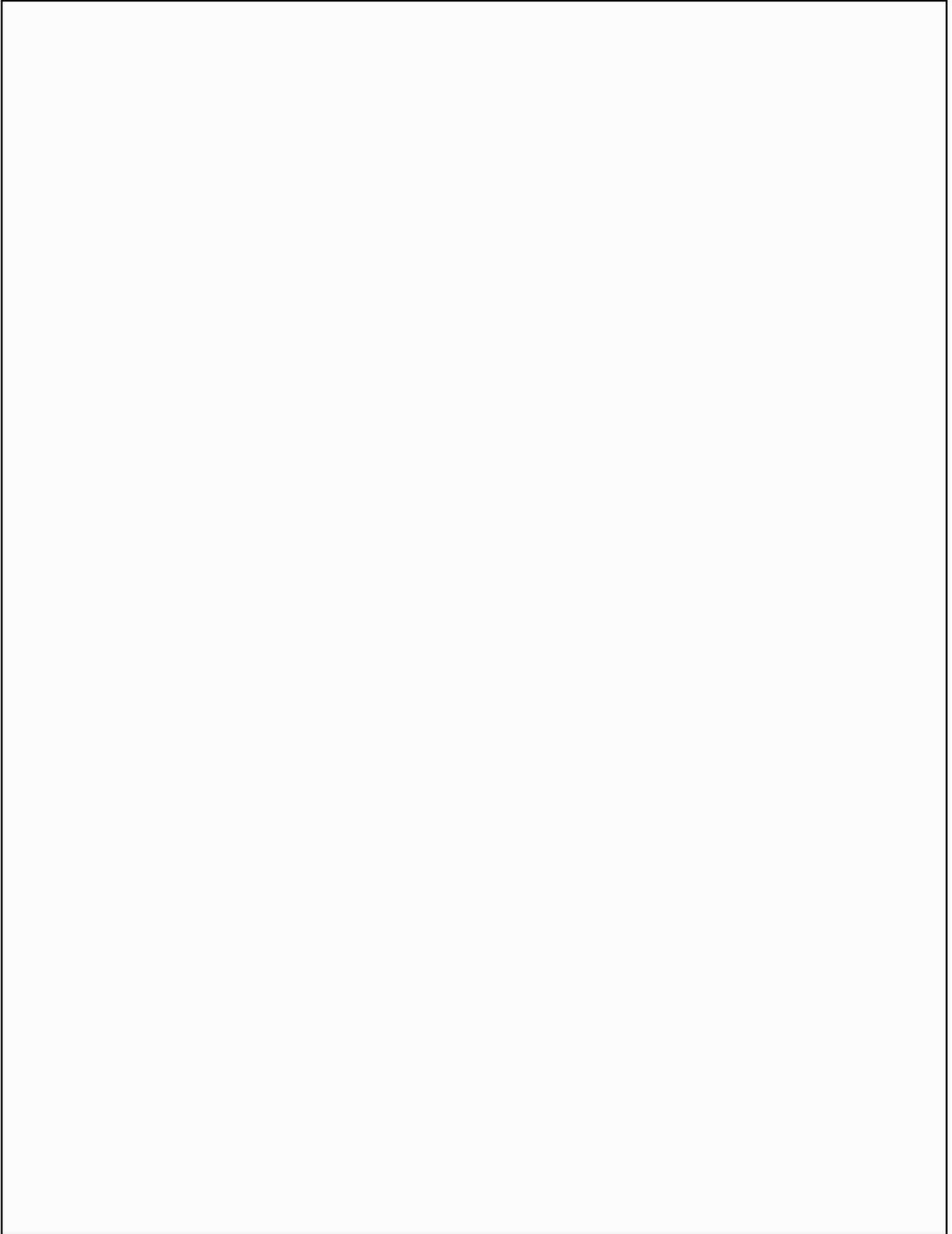
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International Operations  
Research Unit



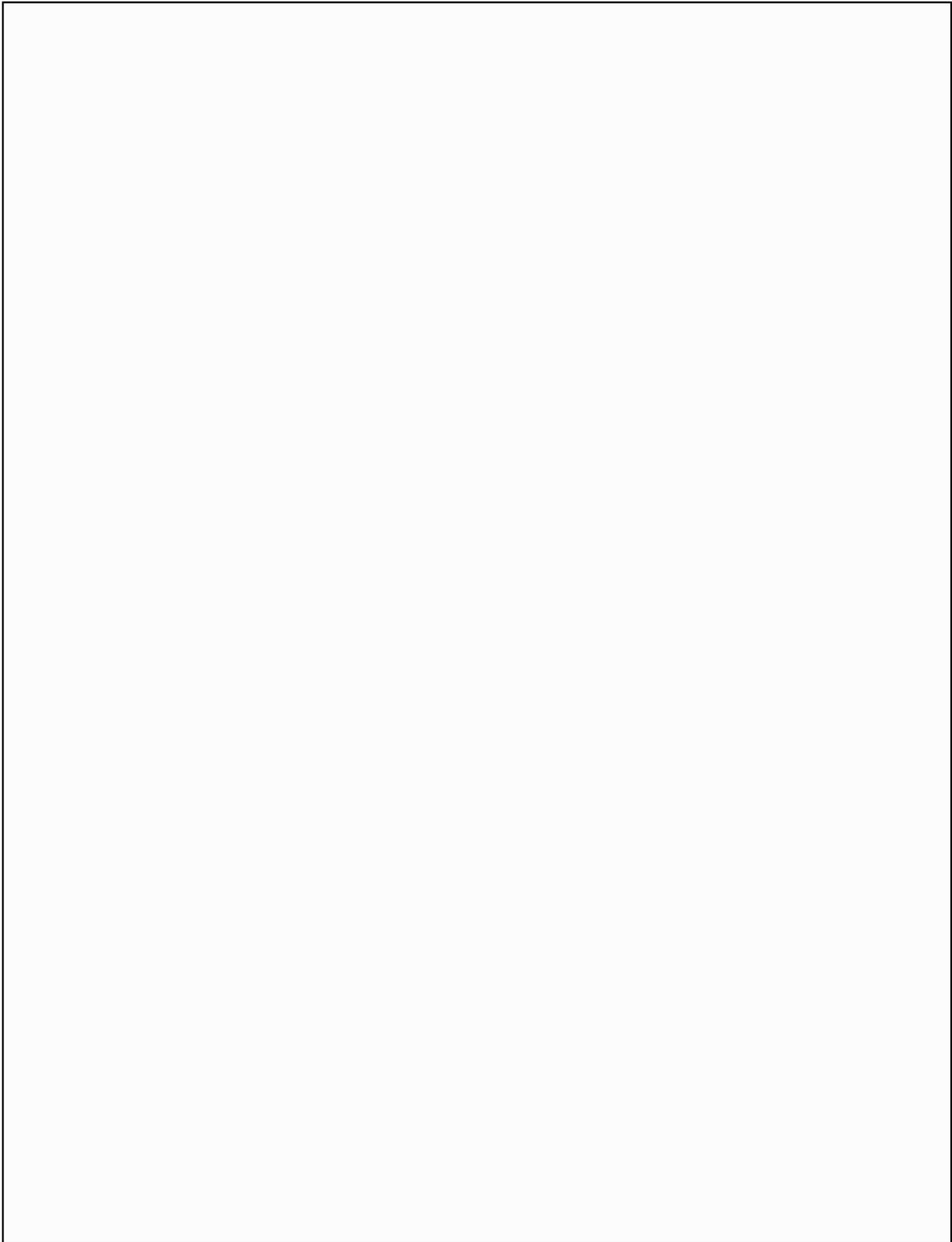
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



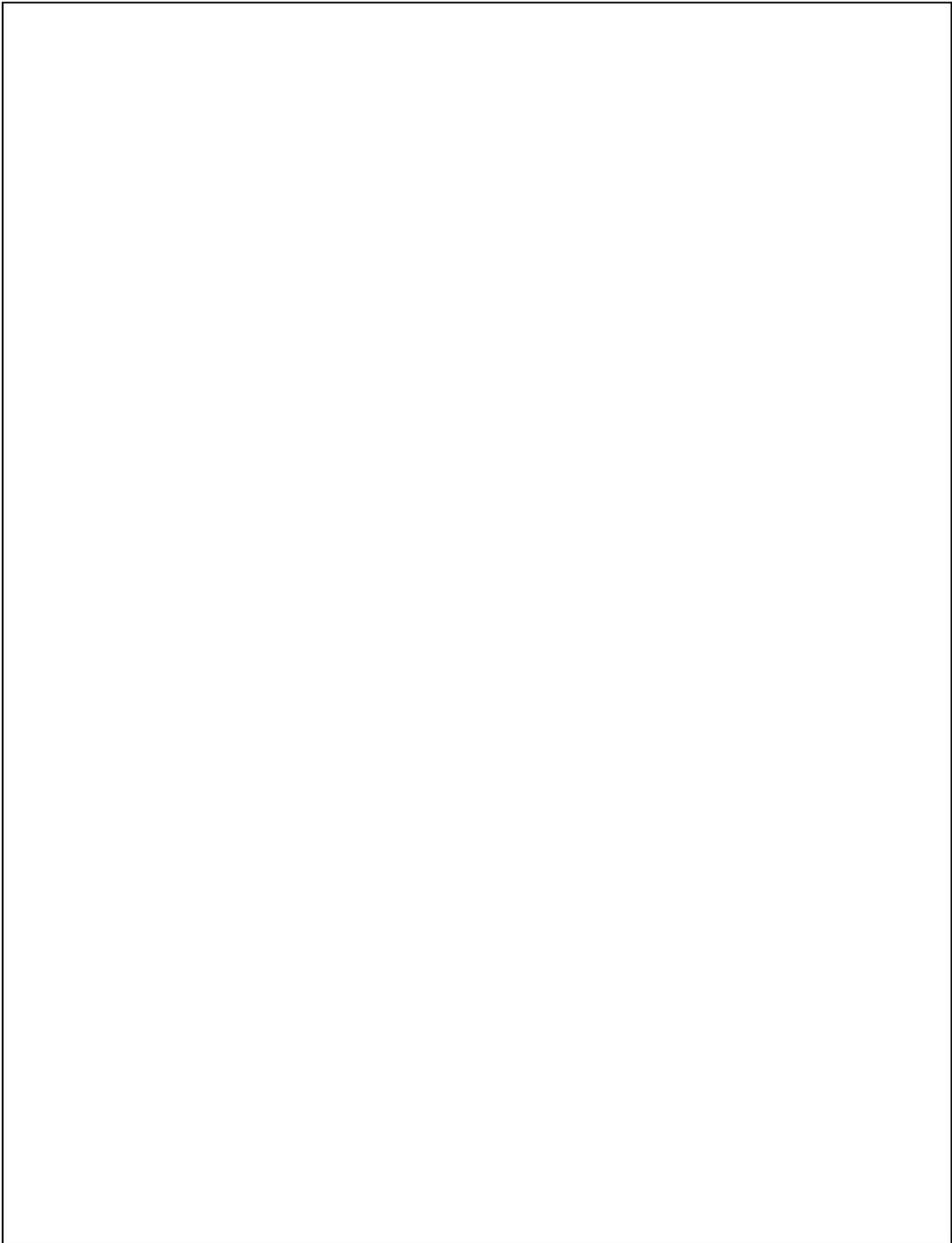
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations  
Research Unit



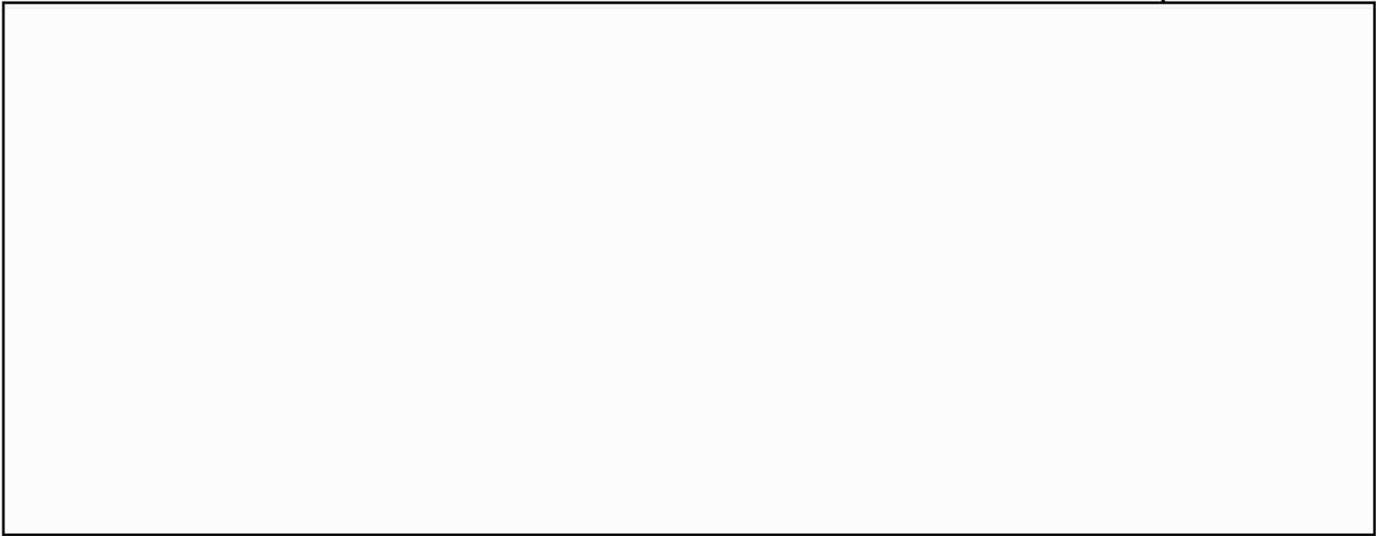
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Refugee, Asylum and  
International Operations



for official use only

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Recommended Sources

**RAIO RU ECN**

<http://ecn.uscis.dhs.gov/team/raio/Research/SitePages/ResearchHome.aspx>

The ECN page for the RAIO Research Unit...

**National Counterterrorism Center**

<http://www.nctc.gov/site/index.html>

This features terrorism information, terrorist profiles, terrorist group details, as well as an interactive timeline and interactive map...

**CIA World Factbook**

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

The World Factbook provides information on the history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues for 267 world entities ...

**Library of Congress Federal Research Division**

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/>

The Federal Research Division provides directed research and analysis on domestic and international subjects to agencies of the United States Government...

**Law Library of Congress**

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/nations.php>

The world's largest collection of law books and legal resources. Including an international database of foreign legal resources...

**Congressional Research Service**

<http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/>

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) works exclusively for the United States Congress, providing policy and legal analysis to committees and Members of both the House and Senate, regardless of party affiliation ...

**Council on Foreign Relations**

<http://www.cfr.org/>

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher...

**International Rescue Committee**

<http://www.rescue.org/>

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives...

**Jamestown foundation**

<http://www.jamestown.org/>

U.S.-based institute for research and analysis, stated mission is to inform and educate policy makers about events and trends. Publications focus on China, Russia, Eurasia, and global terrorism...

**RAND Corporation**

<http://www.rand.org/>

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest...

For a comprehensive list of sources, consult the [Encyclopedia of Internet Resources](#)

## Appendix H: Uniform Citation Guide

### Uniform Citation Guide

For use by USCIS components, including the RAIO Research Unit and immigration adjudicators in written reports used to support recommendations for application of Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG)



No problem...if you ask yourself the following questions:

- %7. Who is the author of the document?
- %7. What is the title of the document?
- %7. Who is the publisher of the document?
- %7. When was the document published?
- %7. What page or pages contain the relevant information?
- %7. What is the URL?

If you have answers to the above questions, then you are ready to accurately and consistently cite in accordance with the following three rules.

## Rule 1: For All Sources Except Web-Only Sources

Citation Format: Author, Title, Periodical/Publisher, Page Number, Publication Date/Year

### General Examples: Rule 1

News: *Russian Media Use Old Video to Discredit Ukraine's 'Antiterrorist' Operation*, Open Source Center, June 12, 2014.

Journal: Greg Grandin, *Turning the Tide Revisited: An Interview with Noam Chomsky*, NACLA Report on the Americas, p.32, Spring 2012.

Report: *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 – Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Basque Fatherland and Liberty*, U.S. Department of State, Apr. 30, 2014.

Book: Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico's Drug Wars*, p.6, 2011.

Authors: A citation should include the full name of the first and second author. If a piece has more than two authors, only provide the name of one author followed by "et al."

Example – Two Authors: Cindy Chang & Kate Linthicum, *U.S. seeing a surge in Central American asylum seekers*, Los Angeles Times, Dec. 15, 2013.

Example – Three or More Authors: Jaya Ramji-Nogales et al., *Refugee Roulette: Disparities in Asylum Adjudication*, Stanford Law Review, p.21, 2007.

Titles: The titles of all sources should be italicized and contain a hidden hyperlink the first time that it is cited. All major words should be capitalized.

Example – Citing a Report: Joseph Holliday, *Middle East Security Report No. 2: The Struggle for Syria in 2011 – An Operation and Regional Analysis*, Institute for the Study of War, p.4, Dec. 2011.

Example – Citing a Book: Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico's Drug Wars*, p.6, 2011.

Hint: To place text in Small Caps, highlight the desired text, type Ctrl + D, select "Small Caps," and then click OK.

Periodical/Publisher: This may refer to the name of a journal, i.e. Georgetown Law Review, or to an organization, i.e. Amnesty International. Foreign sources should be followed by a parenthetical abbreviation for the country of origin when the country of origin is not apparent from the name of the source.

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**Example – Foreign Source with Parenthetical:** Daniel Valencia Cervantes, *Harry, el Policía Matapandilleros*, El Faro (El Sal.), June 8, 2014.

**Example – Foreign Source without Parenthetical:** *Colombia: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Including Relocation Options Available to IDPs*, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, July 12, 2013.

**Page Number:** Generally, page numbers are only available in books and reports. Some reports, such as the Department of State human rights reports, do not include page numbers. If a page number is not available, then skip this section.

**Example – Report with Page Number:** *Humanitarian Bulletin: Colombia*, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, p.4, April 1-30, 2014.

**Example – Report without Page Number:** *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 – Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Basque Fatherland and Liberty*, U.S. Department of State, Apr. 30, 2014.

**Publication Date:** Always cite to the most specific date of publication available. Some sources, most commonly books, only provide a year of publication. Others provide a season and year, i.e. spring 2014, and others provide a full date, including month, day, and year.

**Example – Full Date Available:** Pamela Constable, *Former Salvadoran Gang Member Says He’s Living Right and Deserves U.S. Protection*, Washington Post, May 18, 2014

**Example – Only Year Available:** Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico’s Drug Wars*, p.6, 2011.

**Example – Season and Year Available:** Greg Grandin, *Turning the Tide Revisited: An Interview with Noam Chomsky*, NACLA Report on the Americas, p.32, Spring 2012.

**Hyperlinks:** Where available, embed a hyperlink in the title of the document the first time that it is cited. This will allow the reader to pull up the source, if necessary.

**How to Hyperlink:**

Copy the desired URL, highlight the text to be hyperlinked, then type Ctrl + K, paste the URL into the “address” box, and hit OK.

**Example – Hyperlinked Text:** Chris Kraul, [Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Wins Reelection](#), Los Angeles Times, June 15, 2014

Microsoft Word automatically changes the font color and underlines hyperlinked text. To finish citing, manually change the font color to black and remove the underline.

Example – Embedded Hyperlink in Title: Chris Kraul, *Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Wins Reelection*, Los Angeles Times, June 15, 2014

## Rule 2: Web Sources

This rule applies only to direct citations to the internet, meaning that the source is not printed elsewhere. Note, very few sources cited in formal research products are direct citations to the internet. You may need to use this rule when citing to information found on an organization's home page.

Citation Format: Name of Organization/Group, Title of Page, Visible URL (last visited date).

Example: Oromo Liberation Front, Our Mission,

<http://www.romoliberationfront.org/OLFMission.htm> (last visited July 14, 2014).

Example: GlobalSecurity.org, About Us, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/index.html> (last visited July 14, 2014).

## Rule 3: Short-form Citation

A full citation only needs to be provided the first time that a source is cited. The same source may be cited in the short-form after the first time it is cited, typically by citing to the author's last name. If there is no author, the short-form should cite to the title of the piece. Some sources have long titles. The full title must be provided the first time that the source is cited, but a shortened version of the title may be used by appropriately using "hereinafter." See examples below.

Example – First Time Cited: Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico's Drug Wars*, p.6, 2010.

Example – Second Time Cited: Longmire (2010), p.12.

Inclusion of the publication date distinguishes between cited sources attributed to the same author.

Example – First Time Citing to a Source with a Lengthy Title: *Containment Plan: Bulgaria's Pushbacks and Detentions of Syrian and Other Asylum Seekers and Migrants*, Human Rights Watch,

p.4, Apr. 2014 (hereinafter *Containment Plan*).

Example – Second Time Citing after Notating “hereinafter” : *Containment Plan*, p.8.

## Citation Appendix: Abbreviations of Months and Selected Countries

**Months**

January (Jan.)	July
February (Feb.)	August (Aug.)
March (Mar.)	September (Sept.)
April (Apr.)	October (Oct.)
May	November (Nov.)
June	December (Dec.)

**Select Countries**

Afghanistan (Afg.)	Ethiopia (Eth.)	Nicaragua (Nic.)	Venezuela (Ven.)
Algeria (Alg.)	France (Fr.)	Nigeria (Nig.)	Yemen (Yem.)
Angola (Ang.)	Gambia (Gam.)	Northern Ireland (N. Ire.)	
Argentina (Arg.)	Georgia (Geor.)	Norway (Nor.)	
Armenia (Arm.)	Germany (Ger.)	Pakistan (Pak.)	
Australia (Aust.)	Ghana (Gha.)	Panama (Pan.)	
Austria (Aus.)	Guatemala (Guat.)	Philippines (Phil.)	
Azerbaijan (Azer.)	Guayana (Guy.)	Poland (Pol.)	
Bahrain (Bahr.)	Haiti (Hai.)	Portugal (Port.)	
Bangladesh (Bangl.)	Honduras (Hon.)	Qatar (Qtr.)	
Belarus (Belr.)	India (Ind.)	Russia (Rus.)	
Belgium (Bel.)	Iran (Irn.)	Rwanda (Rwa.)	
Bolivia (Bol.)	Iraq (Irq.)	Saudi Arabia (SA)	
Brazil (Braz.)	Ireland (Ire.)	Scotland (Scot.)	
Bulgaria (Bulg.)	Israel (Isr.)	Senegal (Sen.)	
Cambodia (Camb.)	Italy (Ita.)	Serbia & Montenegro (Serb. & Mont.)	
Cameroon (Cam.)	Jamaica (Jam.)	Sierra Leone (SL)	
Canada (Can.)	Jordan (Jor.)	Singapore (Sing.)	
Central African Rep. (CAR)	Kenya (Ken.)	Somalia (Som.)	
China (PRC)	Korea, North (PRK)	South Africa (S. Afr.)	
Colombia (Col.)	Korea, South (Kor.)	Spain (Spa.)	
Congo, Rep. of (Con.)	Kuwait (Kuw.)	Sri Lanka (Sri Lan.)	
Congo, Dem. Rep. of (DRC)	Lebanon (Leb.)	Sudan (Sdn.)	
Costa Rica (CR)	Liberia (Lib.)	Sweden (Swe.)	
Croatia (Cro.)	Libya (Lby.)	Switzerland (Sui.)	
Denmark (Den.)	Malawi (Mal.)	Taiwan (Tai.)	
Dominican Republic (DR)	Mexico (Mex.)	Tunisia (Tun.)	
Egypt (Egy.)	Mongolia (Mong.)	Turkey (Tur.)	
El Salvador (El Sal.)	Morocco (Mor.)	Uganda (Uga.)	
England (Eng.)	Nepal (Nep.)	Ukraine (Ukr.)	
Eritrea (Eri.)	Netherlands (Neth.)	United Arab Emirates (UAE)	
Estonia (Est.)	New Zealand (NZ)	United Kingdom (UK)	

**Appendix I: El Rescate Index of Accountability**

## (ERIA)

### Appendix I-1: Background of El Rescate

El Rescate is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1981 in Los Angeles. It was the first agency in the United States to respond with free legal and social services to the mass influx of refugees fleeing the civil war in El Salvador. Among other projects, El Rescate created a database named the *Index of Accountability*, linking both government military personnel/units and rebel forces to human rights violations committed during the conflict. The original *Index of Accountability* was a series of books and materials, which was later digitized by El Rescate.

Per the description of the database on [El Rescate's publically available website](#) "The Index covers the entire civil war period, between January 1980 and January 1992. It is based upon principles of contemporary international human rights law, materials published by Tutela Legal, and a two-year study of the Salvadoran military done by El Rescate. This study was essential to establishing command responsibility because it shows where particular officers served and when, as well as whether the unit which they commanded had geographical responsibility. The study's innovation and digitized results provided the ability to cross-reference it with the violations database to create individual dossiers of abuses linked to each officer."

The information in the *Index of Accountability* is based on the extensive files of individual human rights abuses documented by Tutela Legal, the legal aid branch of the Arzobispado de San Salvador (San Salvador Archbishop's Office) beginning in 1982, and by Socorro Juridico, Tutela's predecessor organization, prior to 1982. The database was used by the United Nations Ad Hoc and Truth Commissions in their deliberations on cleansing the Salvadoran military of officers suspected of committing war crimes.

While the database contains extensive information on human rights violations, it is not comprehensive in identifying all violations or all violators. If a search of the database does not yield a specific reference to the issues of interest, this should not be interpreted as an indication that the specific individual or military unit was not involved in any human rights incidents.

With El Rescate's permission and the assistance of the Washington Office on Latin America and the National Security Archive, one of the few remaining copies of the database was obtained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service's Resource Information Center (the predecessor to the RAIO Research Unit in USCIS' Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate). In order to allow for greater search functionality of details relevant to asylum/NACARA adjudications, the Resource Information Center restructured the fields and used it as a Microsoft Access historical database, without altering the information in the database. In 2014, an upgraded version of Windows was introduced to USCIS, resulting in a loss of access to the El Rescate database. The El Rescate database has been reconstructed in 2016; again, the information contained in the database has not been altered.

## Appendix I-2: Details used in an ERIA search

To conduct a thorough search of the El Rescate database, *Index of Accountability*, for possible connections to human rights violations committed during El Salvador's civil conflict, the query should provide as much of the following details of the applicant's military service as available.

Full name, and rank(s).

Dates of service: At the very least we need the years; if possible, month/year. If applicable, a breakdown of the periods of time in different units and/or different locations. Note that the database records cover the period of January 1, 1980 through January 1, 1992.

Location of service - all the details he can provide, for each location(s) where stationed or patrolled. At the very least, the department; if possible, the municipality, canton, city/village.

A key issue is whether or not the applicant served in the Salvadoran Army (as opposed to other branches of the Armed Forces of El Salvador, or other organizations including security forces, police forces, training centers, civil defense patrols, guerilla militias).

The ERIA database includes more details about the structure of the Salvadoran Army as compared to any other entity. To start, see if the query notes that the applicant was a member of any one of the following units/organizations (these units are on the larger end of the Salvadoran Army's organizational structure):

\* Infantry Brigade. They are numbered 1-6, as in 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade (Primera Brigada de Infanteria), etc.

\* Military Detachment. They run #1-7, so 1<sup>st</sup> Military Detachment (Destacamento Militar #1, or DM 1), etc. There is also the Military Detachment of Engineers of the Armed Forces (Destacamento Militar de Ingenieros de la Fuerza Armada).

\* Arce Battalion (Batallon Arce), Atlacatl Battalion, Atonal Battalion, Belloso Battalion, Bracamonte Battalion, Paracaidistas Battalion, Sanidad Militar Battalion. The first five are the larger battalions in the Salvadoran Army. Paracaidistas Battalion (paratroopers) is actually in the Air Force. Batallon de Sanidad Militar was a specialized battalion (military health) in the Army.

Additionally, it helps to have the name or number of any smaller unit or group, such as a company, squadron, or platoon within the larger unit (Brigade, Military Detachment, or the Battalions noted above).

Commanding Officers – names and ranks, immediate and higher-ups, all that he can recall. If possible, it helps to clarify whether the CO was immediately above applicant (did applicant report directly to this CO) or is this CO higher-up; perhaps the applicant can name the CO's level of command, by unit (example, battalion commander) or by rank (Captain, Colonel).

If the applicant was in some other branch of the Armed Forces of El Salvador, it could have been the Navy (which included the Marines); Air Force; Security Forces (divided into three units - National Guard, National Police, and Treasury Police/Policia de Hacienda). Additionally, there were a few other police forces: Municipal, Transit, and Customs (Aduanas). He may have been in the civil defense / civil patrols. If he names any of these other organizations, try to get the

## Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Research Unit

same types of details as noted above for the Salvadoran Army: unit, sub-unit, dates and locations, commanding officer(s).

If the applicant was a rebel in the FMLN, see if he also named any organization within the FMLN (ERP, FAL, FARN, FPL, PRTC). Any details of dates, locations, and commanding officer(s) while serving in the FMLN?

### **Appendix I-3: ERIA access and basic search procedures**

Access: At any given time, RAIO RU should have one or two staff members who have user *and* administrative access to ERIA. Admin access is needed in order to provide access to new users, as well as providing admin access to other users. To request user access, the following details need to be sent to the RU point of contact who has admin access: *first name, last name, username, email, office phone*. You can expect access that same day. Passwords are not required. Just click the green SIGN-IN button.

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The following link will take you to the ERIA website: <https://eria.uscis.dhs.gov/units>

### Basic search procedures:

Date format: YYYYMMDD

Name search: select the VIOLATORS tab to search for the names of individuals. Only enter one component of the entire name, ie, only enter one of the surnames, or only enter the first or middle name. Try each component of the name, one at a time. There are not a great amount of names, so even entering 'Juan' or 'Jose' is manageable.

If there are any matches, the full name of all individuals with that name component will appear as a result, and you can see if you have a match. Take note that if the database includes an individual, it will only have one version of his name throughout all relevant records (for example, it won't list First/Middle/Surname#1, and then later include him with an additional Surname #2, or without the middle name.

All of the individuals listed under the VIOLATORS tab will only be officers. Check the names of any Commanding Officers provided in the query. Also check for the applicant's name, in case he was more than just a 'soldado.'

Next, do a search starting with the ORGANIZATIONS page, which is a list of 65 units/ branches/ entities involved in the civil war. The search is initiated on the basis of the military unit, and then the search is refined as you add the date range and the department. Any other details regarding locations or sub-units can be entered in the field "City, Site, Jurisdiction or Note." If the details that you are working with are vague, or few in number, on occasion the ERIA record of the Commanding Officer(s) provided in the same query might help clarify the search of the applicant's military service. An alternative search can be done by starting on the VIOLATIONS page; this might help when you do not have unit details listed on the ORGANIZATIONS page.

To SAVE a list of records that can be attached to a query response:

- Highlight, starting at lower right, up to and including the blank space at top left column (next to "Violation date")
- Google Chrome > Right Click > Print
- Verify the "Destination" is "Save to PDF"
- Hit the blue "Save" button

## Appendix I-4: Extensive reference material

[NOTE: Material was compiled as an aid for users of ERIA, not necessarily as an official, cited source]

### Military zones and related units

El Salvador is divided into six military zones. Each zone has a specific unit and command structure which is responsible for that zone. Normally zones are comprised of three departments, but not always and each department is assigned to a specific unit and command.

#### Zone 1: First Infantry Brigade

San Salvador: First Infantry Brigade

La Paz: Military Detachment of Engineers of the Armed Forces (DMIFA)

La Libertad: First Infantry Brigade

(Sources also note the Cavalry Regiment as being based in La Libertad, and the Artillery Brigade as being based in Opico municipality, La Libertad)

#### Zone 2: Second Infantry Brigade

Santa Ana: Second Infantry Brigade

Ahuachapán: Military Detachment #7

Sonsonate: Military Detachment #6

Zone 3: Third Infantry Brigade

San Miguel: Third Infantry Brigade

Morazán: Military Detachment #4 (starting 1982)

La Unión: Military Detachment #3 (6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade prior to 1982)

Zone 4: Fourth Infantry Brigade

Chalatenango: Military Detachment #1

(Sources also note the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade as being based specifically in El Paraiso municipality, Chalatenango)

Zone 5: Fifth Infantry Brigade

San Vicente: Fifth Infantry Brigade (starting March 1981)

Cuscatlán: Military Detachment #5

Cabañas : Military Detachment #2

Zone 6: Sixth Infantry Brigade

Usulután: Sixth Infantry Brigade (DM #4 prior to 1982)

Index to Accountability, Preliminary Document July 22, 1992, El Rescate, Los Angeles.

### Locations in El Salvador: Departments, Municipalities

El Salvador map: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/elsalvador.jpg>

El Salvador is divided into fourteen administrative divisions called departments, the equivalent of counties in the United States. The departments are divided into 263 municipalities (municipios). Municipios are not all of equal size but are required to have a population of at least 10,000. A canton is a type of administrative division of a municipality outside the more urban *caserios*, which border the town or city. *Cantones* can be thought as the more rural parts of a city or town, generally far from the actual urban population.

<u>Department</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>Region</u>
Ahuachapán (AH)	Ahuachapán	Western
Cabañas (CA)	Sensuntepeque	Central
Chalatenango (CH)	Chalatenango	Central
Cuscatlán (CU)	Cojutepeque	Central
La Libertad (LI)	Santa Tecla	Central
La Paz (PA)	Zacatecoluca	Central
La Unión (UN)	La Unión	Eastern
Morazán (MO)	San Francisco Gotera	Eastern
San Miguel (SM)	San Miguel	Eastern

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San Salvador (SS)	San Salvador	Central
San Vicente (SV)	San Vicente	Central
Santa Ana (SA)	Santa Ana	Western
Sonsonate (SO)	Sonsonate	Western
Usulután (US)	Usulután	Eastern

If you are conducting an ERIA search and the query did not provide the department, or it is not clear, on occasion you might be able to come up with the department based on other query details regarding location, especially municipalities.

### Ahuachapán Dept: municipalities

Ahuachapan	Apaneca	Atiquizaya	Concepción de Ataco
El Refugio	Guaymango	Jujutla	San Francisco Menéndez
San Lorenzo	San Pedro Puxtla	Tacuba	Turín

### Cabañas Dept: municipalities

Cinquera	Dolores	Guacotecti	Ilobasco
Jutiapa	San Isidro	Sensuntepeque	Tejutepeque
			Victoria

### Chalatenango Dept: municipalities

Agua Caliente	Arcatao	Azacualpa	Chalatenango
Citalá	Comalapa	Concepción Quezaltepeque	Dulce Nombre de María
El Carrizal	El Paraíso	La Laguna	La Palma
La Reina	Las Vueltas	Nombre de Jesús	Nueva Concepción
Nueva Trinidad	Ojos de Agua	Potonico	San Antonio (de) la Cruz
San Antonio (Los) Ranchos		San Fernando	San Francisco Lempa
San Francisco Morazán		San Ignacio	San Isidro Labrador
San José Cancasque		San José Las Flores	San Luis del Carmen
San Miguel de Mercedes	San Rafael	Santa Rita	Tejutla

### Cuscatlan Dept: municipalities

Candelaria	Cojutepeque	El Carmen	El Rosario
Monte San Juan	Oratorio de Concepción	San Bartolomé Perulapía	San Cristóbal
San José Guayabal	San Pedro Perulapán	San Rafael Cedros	San Ramón
Santa Cruz Analquito	Santa Cruz Michapa	Suchitoto	Tenancingo

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### La Libertad Dept: municipalities

Antiguo Cuscatlán	Chiltiupán	Ciudad Arce	Colón
Comasagua	Huizúcar	Jayaque	Jicalapa
La Libertad	Nuevo Cuscatlán	Opico	Quezaltepeque
Sacacoyo	San José Villanueva	San Matías	San Pablo Tacachico
Santa Tecla	Talnique	Tamanique	Teotepeque
Tepecoyo	Zaragoza		

### La Paz Dept: municipalities

Cuyultitán	El Rosario	Jerusalén	Mercedes La Ceiba
Olocuilta	Paraíso de Osorio	San Antonio Masahuat	San Emigdio
San Francisco Chinameca	San Juan Nonualco	San Juan Talpa	San Juan Tepezontes
San Luis La Herradura	San Luis Talpa	San Miguel Tepezontes	San Pedro Masahuat
San Pedro Nonualco	San Rafael Obrajuelo	Santa María Ostuma	Santiago Nonualco
Tapalhuaca	Zacatecoluca		

### La Union Dept: municipalities

Anamorós	Bolívar	Concepción de Oriente	Conchagua
El Carmen	El Sauce	Intipucá	La Unión
Lislique	Meanguera del Golfo	Nueva Esparta	Pasaquina
Polorós	San Alejo	San José	Santa Rosa de Lima
Yayantique	Yucuaiquín		

### Morazán Dept: municipalities

Arambala	Cacaopera	Chilanga	Corinto
Delicias de Concepción	El Divisadero	El Rosario	Gualococti
Guatajiagua	Joateca	Jocoaitique	Jocoro
Lolotiquillo	Meanguera	Osicala	Perquín
San Carlos	San Fernando	San Francisco Gotera	San Isidro
San Simón	Sensembra	Sociedad	Torola
Yamabal	Yoloaiquín		

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### San Miguel Dept: municipalities

Carolina	Chapeltique	Chinameca	Chirilagua
Ciudad Barrios	Comacarán	El Tránsito	Lolotique
Moncagua	Nueva Guadalupe	Nuevo Edén de San Juan	Quelepa
San Antonio	San Gerardo	San Jorge	San Luis de la Reina
San Miguel	San Rafael Oriente	Sesori	Uluazapa

### San Salvador Dept: municipalities

Aguilares	Apopa	Ayutuxtepeque	Cuscatancingo
Delgado	El Paisnal	Guazapa	Ilopango
Mejicanos	Nejapa	Panchimalco	Rosario de Mora
San Marcos	San Martín	San Salvador	Santiago Texacuangos
Santo Tomás	Soyapango	Tonacatepeque	

### San Vicente Dept: municipalities

Apastepeque	Guadalupe	San Cayetano Istepeque	San Esteban Catarina
San Ildefonso	San Lorenzo	San Sebastián	San Vicente
Santa Clara	Santo Domingo	Tecoluca	Tepetitán
Verapaz			

General COI records provided the following details regarding locations noted by an applicant:  
Cerro de Las Campanas is located in the Apastepeque municipality of San Vicente Department.  
Cerros de San Pedro is located in San Esteban Catarina municipality, San Vicente Department.  
Volcan Chinchontepec is in San Vicente municipality, San Vicente Department.

### Santa Ana Dept: municipalities

Candelaria de la Frontera	Chalchuapa	Coatepeque	El Congo
El Porvenir	Masahuat	Metapán	San Antonio Pajonal
San Sebastián Salitrillo		Santa Ana	Santa Rosa Guachipilín
Santiago de la Frontera		Texistepeque	

### Sonsonate Dept: municipalities

Acajutla	Armenia	Caluco	Cuisnahuat
Izalco	Juayúa	Nahuizalco	Nahulingo
Salcoatitán	San Antonio del Monte	San Julián	Santa Catarina

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Masahuat  
Santa Isabel Ishuatán    Santo Domingo                      Sonsonate                      Sonzacate

Usulután Dept: municipalities

Allegria	Berlin	California	Concepción Batres
El Triunfo	Ereguayquín	Estanzuelas	Jiquilisco
Jucuapa	Jucuarán	Mercedes Umaña	Nueva Granada
Ozatlán	Puerto El Triunfo	San Agustín	San Buenaventura
San Dionisio	San Francisco Javier	Santa Elena	Santa María
Santiago de María	Tecapán	Usulután	

**Unit sizes for the Salvadoran Army**

*[Some of the following text was added into the table below depicting “Unit Size US Army” to extrapolate estimated unit sizes for the Salvadoran Army]*

“By far the dominant service in size and importance, the Salvadoran Army in 1988 had a total strength of 43,000 members, including conscripts. For territorial control, it divided the country into six military zones and fourteen subordinate military regions. The principal combat units consisted of twenty-two medium and fourteen light Antiterrorist Infantry Battalions (Batallones de Infanteria Antiterrorista--BIATs) organized into six infantry brigades, nine cadre infantry regiments (up to forty battalions), one mechanized cavalry regiment (two battalions), one artillery brigade (three battalions), one engineer battalion, six independent immediate-reaction counter-insurgency battalions (1,100 to 1,400 men), and seven detachments (destacamentos). The army also had one paratrooper battalion and one antiaircraft battalion under air force control. Military Detachment Number Four (Destacamento Militar Numero Cuatro - DM4), which was responsible for security in Morazan Departement, typified the army’s command organization. In 1987 DM4 consisted of four battalions, each of which was organized into four companies. A company had four platoons – actually called sections (*secciones*) – of about thirty-four members each. Its zone of responsibility was divided among its four platoons, each of which contained two patrols (*patrullas*). The patrols operated independently, although two or more of the companies often cooperated in an operation.”

‘El Salvador: The Army’ Geographic.org, (Sources: The Library of Congress Country Studies, CIA World Factbook), Data as of November 1988.  
Unit Size (US Army in the late-20th Century).

El Salvadoran Army Globalsecurity.org.    Page last modified 5-10-2016.

US ARMY (late 20<sup>th</sup> century)

SALVADORAN ARMY (1988)

UNIT    PERSONNEL    COMPOSITION

UNIT    PERSONNEL    COMPOSITION

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Army	100,000	2 corps	Army	43,000	
Corps	30,000+	2 divisions			
Division	15,000+	3 brigades			
Brigade	4,500+	3 regiments	Brigade		
			Detachment	2,240	4 battalions
Regiment	1,500+	2 battalions			
Battalion	700	4 companies	Battalion	560	4 companies
Company	175	4 platoons	Company	140	4 sections (secciones)
Platoon	40	4 squads	Section	34	2 patrols (patrullas)
Squad	10				

(The source noted that *secciones* had 34 members each; this was used as starting point to extrapolate the other unit numbers of the Salvadoran Army. Military Detachments were typically composed of 4 battalions, so it would appear that would place them between a brigade and a regiment on the US Army organizational structure.)

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### **Battalions**

The ORGANIZATIONS page of the ERIA database includes seven battalions of the Armed Forces of El Salvador. These are the Batallon de Sanidad Militar (Military Health Battalion), as well as six battalions which were known as Batallón de Infantería de Reacción Inmediata (BIRI), or Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalion. The BIRI were among the largest battalions, with roughly 1100 - 1400 troops each.

Batallon Arce (named after Manuel José Arce) (based in San Miguel)  
 Batallon Atlacatl (based in La Libertad)  
 Batallon Atonal (based in Usulután)  
 Batallon Belloso (named after Ramón Belloso)  
 Batallon Bracamonte (named after Eusebio Bracamonte) (based in La Paz)  
 Batallon de Paracaidistas (paratroopers) -- in the Fuerza Aerea (Air Force)

(RU ECN- Response to Information Request SLV10028.CHI 18 January 2011)

According to "an organizational chart of the Salvadoran armed forces prepared by El Rescate Human Rights Department... the immediate reaction battalions were independent units of approximately 1,000 men each, although the actual size of military units could be 5 to 15 per cent smaller than reported, due to inflated numbers and "ghost soldiers."

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, El Salvador: Information on the Atonal immediate reaction battalion (BIRI) in 1989, and on the 3rd brigade's cazador (hunter) battalion in 1991,  
1 December 1993, SLV16073.

The Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions (BIRI) were created during the 1980s with the mission of being the main fighters against the guerrilla groups of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) during the Civil War of El Salvador. In 1992, because of the Chapultepec Peace Accords, the BIRIs were dissolved.

Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions (Batallones de Infantería de Reacción Inmediata) (BIRI) and Antiterrorist Infantry Battalions (Batallones de Infantería Antiterrorista) (BIAT) are two categories or classifications of battalions in the Salvadoran Army. Sources indicate that battalions classified as BIATs were in 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, DM 3, and DM 4; this list is not exhaustive. Note that the ERIA database only notes battalions by name, and does not make any references to the terms BIRI and BIAT.

During the period of the civil war, battalions in the Salvadoran Army significantly varied in size. A query sent to the RAIO Research Unit might name one of the many smaller or regular-sized battalions which were components of the larger military units. For example, the query could note that the applicant had served in “Primera Brigada de Infanteria, Batallon Soriano” (Soriano Battalion was a part of the First Infantry Brigade).

Regular-sized battalions, as well as other units such as a Company, or a section/ platoon, can be entered further down the line in a particular search, as a sub-unit of a larger unit. In the Salvadoran Army, battalions were formally designated by names, while smaller units such as companies were usually designated by number.

Although a search of ERIA cannot be initiated on the ORGANIZATION page using one of these smaller battalions, they might be valuable as input once you advance past the ORGANIZATION list to the next step, where you can enter (in the field that allows for NOTE) such information as, for example, “Battalon Azmitia” or “Battalon” or “Azmitia.”

*[In ERIA, each listed Infantry Brigade or Military Detachment has the following battalions within its structure. There may have been other battalions; this list only includes battalions noted in ERIA records.]*

## **1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Guazapa

Batallon Soriano

Batallon Libertad

Batallon Pantera

Batallon San Carlos, Batallon Cuartel San Carlos

Batallon de Cazadores,

Batallon de Cazadores del Cuartel San Carlos (Hunters Battalion of the San Carlos Barracks)

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Pipil

Batallon Tecana

Batallon Tazumal  
Batallon Delta

**3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Ponce  
Batallon Cazadores    Batallon Los Cazadores  
Batallon Leon  
Batallon Cuscatlán

“The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade was the principal military installation in the eastern department of San Miguel. The principal units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade during the period in question, 1987-1989, were the Cuscatlán, Leon and Ponce Battalions, all of them Batallones de Infantería Anti-Terrorista (BIATs). The departments encompassed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, including San Miguel, neighboring Morazán and La Unión, had a strong guerrilla presence, were among the most conflictive areas in the country and saw frequent counter-insurgency operations by the military.”

(RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request    SLV08021.CGC    5 Dec 2007)

**4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Cayagua  
Batallon Cobra  
Batallon Azmitia

**5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Cañas  
Batallon Tehuacán  
Batallon Canas de la Guardia Nacional  
Batallon Jiboa

**6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade**

Batallon Oromontique  
Batallon Jucuaran  
Batallon Lempa  
Batallon Recondor  
Batallon Jiboa    (*appears on only 1 record of 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade – error? since Jiboa is in 5<sup>th</sup>*)

**DM 1**

Batallon Sierpe(s)  
Batallon Suchitlán  
Batallon Sumpu(l)

**DM 2**

Batallon Cabañas  
Batallon Victoria  
Batallon Pipil (*3 records*)

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*(ERIA has no records of Batallón JRRL, or Batallón Juan Rodríguez Ramón López)*

“The Batallón JRRL, or the Juan Rodríguez Ramón López (JRRL) Battalion, was one of three battalions (along with the Victoria and Cabañas Battalions) that were the principle counter-insurgency units of the Destacamiento Militar 2 (DM2), Military Detachment 2, located in Sensuntepeque, the departmental capital of Cabañas, one of the most conflictive departments in El Salvador during the war, as can be seen from the number of rights violations recorded by the El Rescate Database.

The El Rescate Database and searches of news sources do not reveal abuses specifically attributed to the Battalion JRRL. However, the database does indicate that the DM2 overall was responsible for many abuses in Cabañas from 1985 (the first year the database specifically refers to the DM2) to 1987. Prior to 1985, the database shows many violations committed in Cabañas by the ejército, army, which could include the JRRL Battalion as it was one of the main units of the DM2. The database often does not differentiate violations by specific units, as witnesses to abuses during the war often were unable to identify specific military units, particularly during heated or ugly incidents. Finally, it should be remembered that the database is by no means comprehensive, and that other unrecorded violations also may have occurred.”

USCIS, El Salvador: Information on Human Rights Record of the Batallón JRRL, JRRL Battalion, of the Destacamiento Militar 2 (DM2), Military Detachment 2 SLV02004.ZAR, September 6, 2002.

### **DM 3**

Batallon Conchagua    Batallon Los Invencibles de Conchagua  
Batallon Fonseca

“The two principal units of DM3 were the Conchagua and Fonseca Battalions, which were Batallones de Infantería Antiterrorista (**BIATs**), Anti-Terrorist Infantry Battalions.

RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request    SLV06085.ARL 27 Sep 2006  
<http://ecn.uscis.dhs.gov/team/raio/Research/ResearchUnitDocuments/SLV06085.ARL.pdf>

### **DM 4**

Batallon Lenca  
Batallon Morazán  
Batallon Cacahuatique  
Batallon Ronald Regan  
Batallon Leon

Batallon Salvador Beltran Luna    *(appears on 1 record of DM4, and nowhere else in database.  
The sole record notes “Coronel Salvador Beltran Luna”)*

“The principal counter-insurgency battalions of DM4 during the conflict were the Morazán, Lenca, and Cacahuatique Battalions, all of them Batallones de Infantería Anti-Terrorista (**BIATs**), Anti-Terrorist Infantry Battalions. Jane’s Defence Weekly, in its 1990 review of the Salvadoran armed forces, also listed a “security battalion” as being part of DM4 but did not specify how it might have differed from the BIATs (English, 14 Apr 1990). Jane’s did not say whether the “security battalion” at DM4 had a name, but it is quite possible that it was **the Beltran Luna Battalion** as Colonel Salvador Beltran Luna was the military commander in Morazán department in the early 1980s. He died when the FMLN guerrillas shot down a helicopter in which he was riding in mid-1982 (Time, 12 July 1982). The Salvadoran military has often named units or

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installations after fallen officers, so it appears that a fourth battalion, quite possibly the security battalion, was given his name.”

RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV06037.ZNK 31 May 2006

<http://ecn.uscis.dhs.gov/team/raio/Research/ResearchUnitDocuments/SLV06037.ZNK.pdf>

**DM 5**

Batallon Relampago

“The **Trueno and Relámpago** Battalions were the principal counter-insurgency units of Destacamiento Militar 5, DM5.”

RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV06044.SFR 12 June 2006

<http://ecn.uscis.dhs.gov/team/raio/Research/ResearchUnitDocuments/SLV06044.SFR.pdf>

**DM 6**

Batallon Jaguar          Batallon El Jaguar

**DM 7**

*(None of the ERIA records of the DM7 include any Batallón)*

=== =====

***[Hunters Battalion - Batallon de Cazadores] ---***

*(‘Cazadores’ appears to be a generic term for a category of battalions, rather than the name of a specific battalion.)*

“An officer with the Military Attaché office at the Embassy of El Salvador in Washington, DC stated that the batallón de cazadores (literally translated as "hunters battalion") was a concept used in the mid-1980s (approximately 1983 to 1985) that resulted in small battalions attached to larger units (29 Jan. 1992). The concept was abandoned at least five years ago, and since then only regular-sized battalions have existed (Ibid.).

“A United States reporter familiar with the armed forces of El Salvador stated that hunter battalions were small battalions intended to carry out "search and destroy" missions and may have consisted of approx 100 men, usually with one hunter battalion attached to a brigade-level unit (29 Jan. 1992).”

Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *El Salvador: Information on the Atonal immediate reaction battalion (BIRI) in 1989, and on the 3rd brigade's cazador (hunter) battalion in 1991*, 1 December 1993, SLV16073. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ac115c.html>

=== =====

***[Miscellaneous units/ branches/ entities] ---***

--- ----

***[Nat'l Guard] ---***

“In 1988 the National Guard had 4,200 members which expanded to 7,700 a year later and was organized into fourteen companies (often of battalion size), one per department, a Military Police company, the Technical Assistance Department (a SWAT unit with American military advisors) and the Transport Group. A tactical structure of five commands or battalions could replace the regular organization in an emergency.

--- ----  
**[Security forces] ---**

During the mid-1980s, the three Salvadoran security forces – National Police, National Guard, and Treasury Police – each under the direct command of the military, formed counterinsurgency battalions. In the case of the National Police it was the Batallón Pantera (Panther Battalion). No information on the size of the Batallón Pantera was found among the sources consulted by the Resource Information Center (RIC), however, its counterpart at the Treasury Police, the Batallón de Libertadores (Liberators Battalion), had 350 men (Jane’s Intelligence Review; NYT) (RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV06045.HRLD 27 June 2006)

--- ----  
**[Navy / Marines] ---**

“In 1988 the Salvadoran Navy, with at least 1,300 members, included the 600-man Marine Infantry Battalion (Batallon de Infanteria de Marina — BIM), a 330-man commando unit, and some conscripts. The principal naval base was located at La Union. A naval school was located at Army Headquarters in San Salvador.”  
El Salvador: a country study, Library of Congress, Nov. 1988.

Navy unit October 12th Naval Infantry Battalion (BIM) --- “The unit in question, “Infanteria de Marine,” is probably a reference to the “**12 Octubre**” Batallón de Infantería de Marina (BIM), “October 12th” Naval Infantry Battalion, one of the principal units of the Navy of El Salvador during the conflict, also referred to as the Batallón de Infantes de Marina (Payne).  
(RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV06078.ZSF 18 September 2006)

--- ----  
**[Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol (PRAL)] ---**

“By the mid 1980’s, a Patrulla de Reconocimiento de Alcance Largo (PRAL), Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol, also referred to as a “Recondo,” was a unit assigned to each of the main military installations in the country, including the 5th Brigade in San Vicente department.  
(RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV10026.SFR December 23, 2010  
Subject: El Salvador: Information about human rights abuses committed by PRAL soldiers of the First Infantry Brigade from 1988 to 1997)

--- ----  
**[Primera Bateria Antiaeria] ---**

“During the 1970s and 1980s, the Primera Brigada de Artilleria or the First Artillery Brigade was part of the Salvadoran Army. Its principal base was in the western department of La Libertad, which is adjacent to Sonsonate department. Research of Salvadoran and international media and human rights sources and the literature on the Salvadoran military during the 1970s did not produce any references to the location of its Primera Bateria Antiaeria sub-unit in Sonsonate department, the department stated as the location by the applicant.

(RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV08041.WAS 12 February 2008  
Subject: El Salvador: Information on the activities of the Primera Bateria Antiaeria or the First Anti-Air Battery,

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a sub-unit of the Primera Brigada de Artilleria or the First Artillery Brigade, of the Salvadoran military in the Sonsonate Department)

--- ----  
***[Recondor / reconnaissance units] ---***

“According to a Canadian military source familiar with the Salvadoran armed forces, the Oromontique battalion is part of the Sixth Brigade in Usulután, the "recondor" are reconnaissance detachments or units within a larger unit, and the S-2 are the intelligence officers working with units in the field (4 Feb. 1992). The source added that there is little mobility in Salvadoran and Latin American armed forces in general, indicating that a unit may remain attached to another or based in an area for a prolonged period (*Ibid.*).

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, El Salvador: Information on the S-2, "recondor" and Oromontique military units, SLV10000, 1 January 1992

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aaf270.html>

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***[Morazán department] ---***

**Morazán was one of the most highly conflictive departments** throughout the conflict (1980-1992), a department where The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front or Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) guerrillas maintained a strong presence practically everywhere, especially in the half of the department north of the Torola River and San Francisco Gotera, and where frequent counter-insurgency operations and retaliation by the military resulted in human rights violations. This held true until the signing of the peace accords in January 1992, as indicated by the five news articles from 1990 and 1991 excerpted below; none specifically mention the Cacahuatique Battalion, but all report on the continued repressive atmosphere in Morazán department during the period in question.

(RU ECN- Archives El Sal, Response to Information Request SLV08029.SGC 31 December 2007

Subject: El Salvador: Information on the Cacahuatique Battalion, DM4, Morazán Department.

### Appendix I-5: Text for ERIA query responses

*The following sections of text are suggested for ERIA query responses.*

*(Beginning of query response, in which records were found)*

The El Rescate database, Index of Accountability, (ERIA) contains extensive information on human rights violations during El Salvador's civil conflict, January 1, 1980 through January 1, 1992. Based upon the information provided in this query, a thorough search of the database indicates that the applicant in question could be connected to human rights violations. His overall military unit was involved in human rights violations during the dates of his service.

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A search covering the period of January 1, 19xx through \_\_\_ resulted in \_\_\_ incidents of human rights violations involving the Primera Brigada de Infanteria (First Infantry Brigade).

*(Beginning of query response, in which no records were found)*

Based upon the information provided in this query, a thorough search of the El Rescate database, the Index of Accountability, did not indicate any connection to human rights violations for the applicant in question.

*(Possible inclusion. Could be used when records were found and when no records were found)*

While the El Rescate database contains extensive information on human rights violations during El Salvador's civil conflict, it is not comprehensive in identifying all violations or all violators. If a search of the database does not yield a specific reference to the individual under review, this should not be interpreted as an indication that the specific individual or military unit was not involved in any human rights incidents.

*(Add to all ERIA query responses, or at least to responses which included an attachment of ERIA records)*

El Rescate Index of Accountability, El Rescate, <https://eria.uscis.dhs.gov/> (last visited DATE)

*(Include in response when query falls short on the amount of details provided -- 3 examples)*

A more conclusive search could be conducted if we had further details regarding the applicant's service, such as the name or number of any smaller unit or group (such as a Battalion or Company) within the First Infantry Brigade, and/or any details regarding the location(s) he was in during his military service such as the department, municipality, canton, city, or village.

A more conclusive search could be conducted if we had any details regarding the name or number of any smaller unit or group (such as a Company or Battalion) within DM 3, and/or any details regarding location(s) within La Union department, such as municipality, canton, city, or village.

Based upon the information provided in this particular query, a conclusive search cannot be conducted for the applicant's military service from 1989 up to the end of the records in January, 1992. We would need to know if he was in the Army or in some other branch of the Armed Forces, and his military unit, with as much details as possible; at the very least, the Battalion or the Brigade or the Destacamento Militar No. \_ (Military Detachment # \_). It would also be helpful to have the name or number of any smaller unit or group (such as a Company) within the larger unit (battalion, brigade, or Military Detachment).

*(Possible inclusion, if relevant)*

Regarding the violation types noted in the attachment, the term "indiscriminate military attack" refers to an attack in which no distinction was made between armed guerrillas and unarmed civilians, while "capture" refers to an illegal detention or arrest.

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*(Ending of query response)*

A general search of other available open sources of Country of Origin Information (COI) did not indicate any connection to human rights violations for the applicant.

This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to asylum or refugee status or any other immigration benefit.

*(Query response for an individual whose military service was post- January 1, 1992)*

The El Rescate database, Index of Accountability, (ERIA) contains extensive information on human rights violations during El Salvador's civil conflict. The database records only encompass cover the period of January 1, 1980 through January 1, 1992, therefor, no ERIA search can be conducted for this case.

A general search of other available open sources of Country of Origin Information (COI) did not indicate any connection to human rights violations for the applicant.

This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to asylum or refugee status or any other immigration benefit.

*(Query response for an individual from Honduras or elsewhere, not El Salvador)*

This query is similar to the numerous queries we receive from the VSC regarding the El Salvador TPS caseload. For those queries, we are able to search a database, the El Rescate Index of Accountability, which contains extensive information on human rights violations and military units during El Salvador's civil conflict, 1980 - 1992. Unfortunately, there is no similar database regarding the Honduran military.

A general search of open sources of Country of Origin information (COI) did not indicate any connection to human rights violations in Honduras for the period \_\_\_\_ for the applicant or the applicant's military unit as named in your query.

This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to any immigration benefit.