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By Bryce Baschuk

Humanitarian relief is no vacation, and Judy McCallum can tell you all about it. As a business development consultant for the Olive Group, an international security firm in the District, she has traveled to some of the most remote and dangerous parts of the world. "It's nice to travel for my job, but they don't really need humanitarian relief in Paris," she said.

Since she joined the Olive Group in May, Ms. McCallum has been to war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Jordan and Uzbekistan. "These are places where water and electricity are not always a given," she said. But then again, neither is personal safety. Ms. McCallum's job is to help ensure that humanitarian workers who visit the volatile regions of the world will come back alive and well. "Ten years ago, humanitarian relief used to be a relatively safe endeavor," Ms. McCallum said. "That's no longer the case. The people giving humanitarian assistance aren't safe anymore. Unfortunately, wars and civil unrest and the need for security aren't going away. So the market for our services has gotten bigger."

So big, that the leading companies in the "peace and stability" industry have aligned to form the International Peace Operations Association, a trade organization that provides services in post-conflict regions.

This month, Ms. McCallum was elected to the executive committee of the association, where she will help industry leaders discover new ways to increase security and protect human rights. "Her knowledge of the security industry, specifically in the [nongovernmental organization] sector, will be a great benefit to [the association]," said Doug Brooks, the group's president. Ms. McCallum's role on the board is to develop agendas, run meetings and oversee the committee's projects. "We are proud to add her experience to the collective knowledge of our board," he said.

Ms. McCallum's company, the Olive Group, is one of the private security firms that has expanded to address the needs of organizations headed to unstable areas. The North American division of the Dubai, United Arab Emirates, company, has a

staff of 500 that provides a variety of services from training, logistics, security consulting and risk assessment, to on-the-ground personal protection. The company works with a vast array of clients, including militaries, security intelligence agencies, top-tier companies and humanitarian organizations.

Ms. McCallum's job is to speak with humanitarian workers who want some sort of protection but are not sure of what they need. "That's what I help them figure out," she said. "For instance, I was contacted a few weeks ago by two men who went to Chad, and asked for security protection [such as guards and armored vehicles], and to possibly provide them with logistics assistance, such as a driver and a translator." But personal protection isn't cheap these days. "The average risk assessment will run you several thousand dollars," Ms. McCallum said, "and security can cost you a lot more." She has spent decades working with humanitarian organizations to ensure that their needs are met. She worked with the Defense Department for 25 years, spending the last 13 in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. During this time, she was involved in coordinating humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief projects across the globe.

Ms. McCallum said the highlight of her career was when she helped an organization deliver thousands of wheelchairs to disabled people in Afghanistan. "At the time, getting into Afghanistan was difficult, and we were put in charge of security, and making sure that the right people were getting wheelchairs," she said. "Before we got there, people were dragging themselves through the dirt. One gentleman we met had both his legs amputated high on his thighs. He used two bricks to hoist his body from the ground and then walk around with his arms." During that trip, Ms. McCallum met a woman a few days after the wheelchairs had been distributed. The woman was ecstatic because now she could travel to and from the local tile factory and work from her wheelchair.

"It's the kind of work I like doing, and as long as we're having this turmoil in the world, it's terrific to be part of the solution," she said. Ms. McCallum lives in Herndon with her 18-year-old son.