

The White House

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Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy

United States policy on Security Sector Assistance is aimed at strengthening the ability of the United States to help allies and partner nations build their own security capacity, consistent with the principles of good governance and rule of law. The United States has long recognized that the diversity and complexity of the threats to our national interest require a collaborative approach, both within the United States Government and among allies, partners, and multilateral organizations. More than ever before, we share security responsibilities with other nations and groups to help address security challenges in their countries and regions, whether it is fighting alongside our forces, countering terrorist and international criminal networks, participating in international peacekeeping operations, or building institutions capable of maintaining security, law, and order, and applying justice. U.S. assistance to build capabilities to meet these challenges can yield critical benefits, including reducing the possibility that the United States or partner nations may be required to intervene abroad in response to instability.

Effectively building security capacity requires multi-year investments, though such up-front costs are relatively small when compared to the larger political, economic, and societal costs in the event that local institutions flounder and instability ensues. While security sector assistance can yield significant benefits, the United States cannot build capacity in all countries. It is essential that we are selective and focus our targeted assistance where it can be effective and is in line with our broader foreign policy and national security objectives. Investments of such assistance are critical to better share the costs and responsibility of global leadership.

To address these challenges, the United States must improve its ability to enable partners in providing security and justice for their own people and responding to common security challenges. Therefore, the United States will pursue a new approach to security sector assistance to better meet this complex and interdependent security environment. This approach will align with the goals and guidelines outlined below.

The Definition of Security Sector Assistance

The security sector is composed of those institutions - to include partner governments and international organizations - that have the authority to use force to protect both the state and its citizens at home or abroad, to maintain international peace and security, and to enforce the law and provide oversight of those organizations and

forces. It includes both military and civilian organizations and personnel operating at the international, regional, national, and sub-national levels. Security sector actors include state security and law enforcement providers, governmental security and justice management and oversight bodies, civil society, institutions responsible for border management, customs and civil emergencies, and non-state justice and security providers. Security sector assistance refers to the policies, programs, and activities the United States uses to:

- Engage with foreign partners and help shape their policies and actions in the security sector;
- Help foreign partners build and sustain the capacity and effectiveness of legitimate institutions to provide security, safety, and justice for their people; and,
- Enable foreign partners to contribute to efforts that address common security challenges.

Goals for U.S. Security Sector Assistance

The principal goals of our security sector assistance are to:

1. Help partner nations build sustainable capacity to address common security challenges, specifically to: disrupt and defeat transnational threats; sustain legitimate and effective public safety, security, and justice sector institutions; support legitimate self-defense; contribute to U.S. or partner military operations which may have urgent requirements; maintain control of their territory and jurisdiction waters including air, land, and sea borders; and help indigenous forces assume greater responsibility for operations where U.S. military forces are present.
2. Promote partner support for U.S. interests, through cooperation on national, regional, and global priorities, including, but not limited to, such areas as: military access to airspace and basing rights; improved interoperability and training opportunities; and cooperation on law enforcement, counterterrorism, counternarcotics, combating organized crime and arms trafficking, countering Weapons of Mass Destruction proliferation, and terrorism, intelligence, peacekeeping, and humanitarian efforts.
3. Promote universal values, such as good governance, transparent and accountable oversight of security forces, rule of law, transparency, accountability, delivery of fair and effective justice, and respect for human rights.
4. Strengthen collective security and multinational defense arrangements and organizations, including by helping to build the capacity of troop- and police-contributing nations to United Nations and other multilateral peacekeeping missions, as well as through regional exercises, expert exchanges, and coordination of regional intelligence and law enforcement information exchanges.

Our assistance can also yield the benefit of the adoption of U.S. products and technology, which increases interoperability and interdependence between the United States and partners, lowers the unit cost for all, and strengthens the industrial base.

Policy Guidelines for U.S. Security Sector Assistance

To effectively achieve the goals identified above, the United States must strengthen its own capacity to plan, synchronize, and implement security sector assistance through a deliberate and inclusive whole-of-government process that ensures alignment of activities and resources with our national security priorities. Therefore, the United States will:

- Ensure consistency with broader national security goals. Security Sector Assistance programs will support and complement the full range of broad U.S. national security and foreign assistance objectives.
- Foster United States Government policy coherence and interagency collaboration. Transparency and coordination across the United States Government are needed to integrate security sector assistance into broader strategies, synchronize agency efforts, reduce redundancies, minimize assistance-delivery timelines, ensure considerations of the full range of policy and operational equities, improve data collection, measure effectiveness, enhance and sustain the United States Government's security sector assistance knowledge and skills, and identify gaps.
- Build sustainable capacity through comprehensive sector strategies. Partner capacity can only be sustained over the long-term when partner governments have the political will, absorptive capacity, credible and effective institutions, willingness to independently sustain U.S. investments, an equal stake in the success of security sector initiatives, and policy commitment to security sector reform. United States Government efforts must be sensitive to these requirements, including anticipation of partner capacity, sustainment and oversight needs, coordination with partner governments across the breadth of security sector assistance activities, and pursuit of security sector reform as part of a broader, long term effort to improve governance and promote sustainable economic development.
- Be more selective and use resources for the greatest impact. To maximize the impact of limited resources for security sector assistance, the United States Government will be strategic and focused on investments aligned with national security priorities and in countries where the conditions are right for sustained progress. Resource allocation will be evaluated based on common U.S. Government assessments, multi-year strategies, and performance against measures of effectiveness.
- Be responsive to urgent crises, emergent opportunities, and changes in partner security environments. Though a more strategic, anticipatory approach to security sector assistance should limit this requirement, the United States should have the ability to allocate flexible security sector assistance to respond to short-notice requirements. Timely shifts in partner interests, emerging threats, or performance against security sector objectives may require review of whether security sector investments remain an effective tool in meeting U.S. national security goals. In such instances, U.S. policymakers should consider initiating, restructuring, or terminating security sector assistance programs either as part of the annual planning cycle or on an immediate basis.
- Ensure that short-term interventions are consistent with long term goals. Any instance of surging security sector assistance to meet unforeseen urgent and emergent needs or opportunities should be incorporated into a broader United States Government strategy to sustain any new capacity, mitigate potential negative impacts on other national security objectives, and achieve longer-term U.S. goals and objectives.
- Inform policy with rigorous analysis, assessments, and evaluations. The United States Government will introduce common standards and expectations for assessing security sector assistance requirements, in addition to investing in monitoring and evaluation of security sector assistance programs. Such standards will be aided by a requirement for measurable security sector assistance objectives, appropriate data collection of the impacts and results of security sector assistance programs, and improved efforts to inform decision-making processes with data on what works and what does not work through impact evaluations when permissible. Such standards and data collection will take into account the varying security and information environments where U.S. programs operate.
- Analyze, plan, and act regionally. Security sector assistance programs should be complemented by and linked to a

broader regional approach, including cross-border program coordination, support for regional organizations, and facilitation of linkages among partner countries, where appropriate.

- Coordinate with other donors. The United States Government will establish a division of labor with other bilateral, multilateral, and regional actors based on capacity, effectiveness, and comparative advantage. Such coordination will be aimed at sharing the burden across a greater number of interested parties and enhanced coordination with the partner governments to achieve mutually agreed outcomes.

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