

THE U.S. ASIA-PACIFIC REBALANCE, NATIONAL SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A Climate and Security Correlations Series

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November 2015

THE CENTER FOR
CLIMATE AND
SECURITY

in
partnership
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Carnegie Mellon University
Civil and Environmental Engineering



Center for a
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CLIMATE, SECURITY, AND REFORM

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Introduction

Despite growing crises in the Middle East and Russia that have demanded increasing resources and attention in recent months, a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy under President Obama and the current administration remains the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. The rebalance to Asia is a multidimensional policy initiative that boasts economic, diplomatic, and military objectives. The military components include “a significant shift of military capacities from other theaters of operation to the Asia-Pacific region and a restructuring of security arrangements” – all of which reflect a strategic approach to U.S. relations in the Asia-Pacific region.¹

Security assistance and cooperation – particularly since September 11, 2001 – have focused on kinetic military action or warfare. But in recent years, the nature of the security threat has evolved. There is growing recognition among U.S. military and diplomatic leaders that climate change impacts – including environmental degradation, water insecurity, and extreme weather – are threat multipliers and can affect the security and stability of a nation and an entire region. According to the ground-breaking 2007 Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) report, climate change impacts can weaken failing or collapsing states, thereby exacerbating “conditions for internal conflicts, extremism, and movement toward increased authoritarianism and radical ideologies.”² Additionally, analysts and military thinkers have correctly recognized that “the repercussions of climate change will require the same application of strategy the military would employ when grappling with any foe.”³

The Asia-Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to climate-related disasters and environmental insecurity. Sixty percent of the world’s population will reside in the Indo-Asia-Pacific by 2018. And much of Asia’s population lives along the coast (80 percent of the world’s population lives within

200 miles of the coast, in fact) in the region's megacities – including Bangkok, Beijing, Jakarta, and Shanghai, – which makes these large population centers quite vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding and typhoons. This means that not only is the region vulnerable to climate-related disasters, but these disasters could result in huge fiscal costs and loss of human life. As noted by Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, climate change is the biggest long-term threat to the Asia-Pacific region and will put “many people at risk and disrupt the security environment.”⁴

As the United States rebalances to Asia, American military and diplomatic leaders should reassess the current ways that security assistance programs are organized, implemented, and managed. Policy makers must modify security assistance programs to take into account the changing nature of the threat environment and build relevant capacity among allies in the region. Security assistance reforms should include programs that build host nation capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate-related threats, including natural disasters, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity, as well as from secondary impacts, such as mass migration, political tension and instability, violent conflict, and public health crises.

Security Assistance: A Brief Overview

U.S. security assistance and cooperation has been governed largely by the statutory authority contained in the Foreign Relations and Intercourse (Title 22 U.S. Code) and Armed Services (Title 10 U.S. Code) statutes. As noted by a 2011 Stimson Center report, “Traditionally the State Department plans, budgets and oversees security assistance programs and is the lead agency in charge of all U.S. foreign policy and global engagement” while the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) implements these programs.⁵ Under the statutory authority, the U.S. has provided support to strategic partners and allies in the form of grants and loans for the purchase of U.S. defense equipment and training, and has supported the education and training of foreign military officers.⁶

However, since September 11, 2001, DoD has taken a greater role in planning, budgeting, and providing security assistance and cooperation. DoD officials developed a proposal for a “Global Train and Equip” authority to increase U.S. support for foreign military and security forces in order to disrupt terrorist networks, to build host country capacity, and to strengthen internal security. In 2006, Congress granted the Department of Defense Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act as a special contingency authority that enabled DoD “to fill long-standing gaps in an effort to help other nations build and sustain capable military forces [....].”⁷ The Section 1206 program gives DoD the authority to train and equip foreign militaries to undertake counterterrorism or stability operations. In addition, it was anticipated by officials at the State Department and DoD that the Section 1206 program would allow the U.S. to “train and equip foreign military forces to respond to “urgent and emergent threats” and opportunities.⁸

The four objectives of security assistance reform are to (1) support host country capacity building in order to strengthen internal stability; (2) support building expeditionary capability; (3) support

continuing cooperation and interoperability; and (4) provide security assistance to support strategic partnerships.⁹ Historically, security assistance efforts have focused on kinetic military action or warfare, and in particular, securing internal stability and counterterrorism efforts.

In recent years, however, a growing number of influential and prominent U.S. military and national security leaders have acknowledged that climate change impacts – including environmental degradation, growing water insecurity, extreme weather events, and natural disasters – can serve as a threat multiplier leading to greater internal instability. A natural disaster, for example, could displace thousands of individuals and stress resource availability, fueling underlying tensions, conflict, and political instability.¹⁰ These climate change-related shocks are much different from cross-border kinetic shocks, but could still require military action to address. To illustrate, following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, the U.S. Department of Defense launched “Operation Unified Assistance,” for which the U.S. provided logistics and communications support, satellite imagery, and various supplies.¹¹ In addition, the annual Pacific Partnership exercises, hosted by the U.S. Navy, seek to promote stability, disaster preparedness and response capacity, interoperability, and partnerships among host nations in the Asia-Pacific, nongovernmental organizations, and the U.S. Navy.

Despite the growing recognition that the threat environment is rapidly changing, U.S. military and diplomatic officials have not revisited the issue of security assistance and cooperation to ensure that current security assistance programs are adequately helping governments prepare for and respond to these new challenges.

A Philippine resident sits outside of his home in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan. November 2013. DEFENSE IMAGERY / LIAM KENNEDY, MCSN.



Security Assistance Reform and the Rebalance to Asia

Given the nature of the new threat environment and the potentially destabilizing impact of climate change on host country governments and their internal stability, decision makers within the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Defense should design security assistance programs so that they help build the capacity of our allies in the Asia-Pacific region to prevent, respond to, and recover from climate-related events. Security assistance programs should support disaster risk reduction, response, and resilience efforts.

In the recent 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the Department of Defense acknowledges that the rebalance to Asia will affect force structure, weapons systems and platforms, and operations.¹² DoD also writes that “it will employ creative ways to address the impact of climate change, which will continue to affect the operating environment and the roles and missions that U.S. Armed Forces undertake. The Department will remain ready to operate in a changing environment amid the challenges of climate change and environmental damage. Climate change also creates both a need and an opportunity for nations to work together, which the Department will seize through a range of initiatives. We are developing new policies, strategies, and plans, including [...] our work in building humanitarian assistance and disaster response capabilities, both within the Department and with our allies and partners.”^{13 14}

Historically, the Department of State has worked closely with DoD and the Pacific Area Command (PACOM) “to support military engagement throughout the region in a way that enhances our partnerships, builds local capacity to deal with threats and disasters, and promotes democratic values and development. [...] Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs play a key role by building partner capacity, including strengthening maritime domain awareness capabilities, working with partners as they develop and professionalize their armed forces, and enhancing our partner capabilities and interoperability to work with the United States to address emerging challenges, both internationally, and in the region.”¹⁵

However, despite ongoing efforts and programs, the State Department and DoD have yet to conduct a formal review and assessment of security assistance programs in light of these new security threats. But the widespread recognition by U.S. military and diplomatic leaders of the security implications of climate change in the Asia-Pacific region suggests that there exists an opportunity to pursue security assistance reform.

Recommendations for Security Assistance Reform

There are number of strategies that U.S. decision makers should consider to reform and strengthen

security assistance and cooperation so that the United States and our allies in the Asia-Pacific region can more effectively respond to the new security environment. Policy recommendations, which focus largely on reorganizing the responsibilities of agencies within the U.S. government and on building host country capacity, are discussed below. These recommended strategies can be included within existing security assistance programs designed to build host country capacity, support continuing cooperation and interoperability, and provide security assistance to support strategic partnerships.¹⁶

Improve coordination and integration among U.S. authorities

1. Clarify responsibilities

Officials should review, assess, and modify the division of funding and implementation responsibilities between the U.S. Department of Defense and the State Department. The Department of State owns more traditional security assistance programs – including FMF and IMET; DoD later added their own programs, including the Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program. This has resulted in “overlapping or ambiguous lines of authority and responsibility between the two departments.”¹⁷ The 2011 Stimson Report concluded that the division of responsibilities between DoD and the State Department was often unclear.” In the context of a changing external security environment and challenges, there is urgency to “clarify the institutional relationship between the two principal departments involved in security assistance programs.”¹⁸ In particular, U.S. military and diplomatic leaders need to review the current security assistance reform programs with an eye toward recognizing the broader security threat and acknowledging the need to build host nation capability in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. Decision makers need to identify the clear lines of responsibility for planning, managing, and funding programs related to improving the preparedness, resiliency and response capacity of our partner nations in the Asia-Pacific.

2. Integrate capabilities and planning

Climate change is characterized by increasing volatility in extreme weather patterns and natural disasters, which are generally unpredictable. Unlike planning for wars, responses to natural disasters require immediate short-term ramp-up capacity. Using the Foreign Relations and Intercourse (Title 22 U.S. Code) statute as the legal and operational framework, policymakers should explore ways to expand the role of other U.S. government agencies to support disaster preparedness planning and response.

In addition to DoD and the State Department, several other U.S. government agencies are also working on disaster risk reduction, response, and resilience in the Asia-Pacific Region, including

the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), both of which reside organizationally within DHS. DHS has the third largest presence overseas, following the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of State).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are currently engaged in the Asia-Pacific on the topic of disaster risk reduction and resilience. In Asia, DHS has identified a number of critical partners: China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Australia (and concrete partnerships have been forged with the last three countries). The USCG is often tasked by PACOM to support security cooperation efforts and plays a critical role in bilateral security assistance reform efforts. Often, the U.S. Department of Defense (Navy) allocates resources to DHS/USCG (as well as the State Department and to the Combatant Commands) to assume various aspects of security cooperation (e.g., joint military exercises such as RIMPAC, and trainings).

Despite ongoing collaboration, DHS is not fully integrated into foreign assistance security assistance missions and operations. Fully integrated planning and programming are often hampered by institutional and legal barriers, and information and coordination silos. Decision makers within the Department and Defense and DHS should work together to explore ways to more fully and effectively integrate DHS into foreign security assistance missions and operations in the Asia-Pacific region.

DoD should also consider funding DHS to support the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP), security partnerships between a state's National Guard and the armed forces in a partner country. Through SPP, the National Guard conducts military-to-military engagements in support of defense security goals but also leverages whole-of-society relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader interagency and corollary engagements spanning military, government, economic and social spheres. Often these cooperative security partnerships focus on disaster preparedness and response and resiliency efforts. DoD could include DHS as part of the SPP interagency agreement.

In addition, greater coordination between the DoD Joint Chiefs of Staff and civilian authorities at the State Department is needed to expand military-civil solutions to climate-related security issues and to task and empower civilian capacity to implement broader security sector assistance.

Under State Department leadership, U.S. civilian agencies should explore opportunities to extend security assistance to foreign police, constabulary forces, courts, and the justice system.

3. Improve information sharing across agencies

Military and diplomatic officials should establish an interagency task force to share information

about security assistance efforts around disaster risk reduction and resilience, including preparedness and response, and improve coordination of planning and training efforts. Policymakers should also strengthen coordination and information sharing within existing initiatives and efforts, such as the Asia-Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Network (APDR3) (involving Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam), which connects public and private organizations to strategically solve regional problems in disaster management, as well as energy, water, health, and climate change.



An Armed Forces of the Philippines soldier directs displaced personnel during Operation Damayan, where the Government of the Philippines closely coordinated with international relief efforts to help those in need. November 2013. **DEFENSE IMAGERY / LANCE CPL. CALEB HOOVER**

Building host country capacity

1. Support purchase of dual use equipment

Currently, the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Program, a core component of the security assistance program which is authorized by the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), provides for the sale of

defense articles and/or defense services (to include training) from the Department of Defense stocks or through purchase under DoD-managed contracts. U.S. officials should work to ensure that countries can use FMS funds to purchase dual use equipment that can be used for both traditional military activities and disaster operations. For example, Typhoon Haiyan that devastated the Philippines in 2013 revealed the lack of air and naval transport capabilities, as well as ground assets (i.e. trucks, utility vehicles, amphibious vehicles) that can be used for both military operations and disaster response efforts.¹⁹ Arguably, these gaps in the Philippine's military capacity may have prompted the long-term military agreement penned between the Philippines and the United States in late April 2014 during President Obama's trip to East Asia.

2. Develop a specifically tailored disaster response training and equipment program

Officials at DoD and the Department of State, in collaboration with DHS and FEMA, should design and implement a disaster response training and equipment program that could be integrated into the current course offerings and trainings provided by DoD and the USCG to host nation military and security stakeholders.

Additionally, officials should explore ways to standardize risk reduction, preparedness, and response operations across agencies and partner nations in the Asia-Pacific region in order to improve interoperability. According to subject matter experts, new legislation and policy reforms are needed in the areas of liability, licensing and equipment certification so as to enable agencies, including DHS and other stakeholders, to standardize operations related to disaster preparedness and response.

In April 2014, U.S. Representative Randy Forbes (R-Virginia) and Colleen Hanabusa (D-Hawaii) proposed the Asia Pacific Region Priority Act, which called for the availability of training areas within the U.S. Pacific Command Area of Responsibility. The proposed legislation stated that sustaining training facilities in the PACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) "is essential to not only the continued preparedness of the U.S. military, but also to developing the partner capacity and interoperability necessary for effective security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific."²⁰ While the legislative effort was not successful, it does reflect growing awareness by decision makers about the importance of have designated facilities and training to build the capacity and preparedness of our partners in the Asia- Pacific region.

3. Expand training and capacity building in areas of science and technology (S&T)

Many countries are interested in the analytic and predictive models used by the U.S. government and are interested in developing science and technology (S&T) partnerships with U.S. agencies that

provide security assistance. Many of the strategic allies of the United States in Asia need assistance with scenario planning and coordination and have significant geo-engineering needs, data needs, geospatial mapping, and land use and ocean and marine spatial planning. For example, the U.S. Navy, a widely recognized scientific body, has provided S&T cooperation. The U.S. Army's Corps of Engineers is currently developing a quantitative, analytical tool that measures risk reduction efforts by assessing infrastructure planning, planning efforts, warning systems and evacuation plans. U.S. military and diplomatic leaders should explore ways to improve coordination across the U.S. government to develop these S&T partnerships that can help governments in the Asia-Pacific region address new security threats and build capacity in the area of reducing, responding to and recovering from climate-related events, including natural disasters.

While efforts to fully pivot to the Asia-Pacific region have been slowed by growing violence in the Middle East and North Africa and diplomatic crises with Russia, military and diplomatic strategists well understand the long-term economic and military importance of fully engaging with our partners in the Asia-Pacific Region. Critical to our mutual success is our ability to build capacity among our allies in the region to prepare for and respond to the changing external threat environment, which consists of both kinetic and non-kinetic threats. The recommendations outlined here can be included within existing security assistance programs designed to build host country capacity, support continuing cooperation and interoperability, and provide security assistance to support strategic partnerships.

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Notes

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- 2 The CNA Corporation, *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*, 2007, available at http://www.npr.org/documents/2007/apr/security_climate.pdf
- 3 Wyatt Olson, "PACOM not waiting on politics to plan for climate change challenges," *Stars and Stripes*, August 10, 2014, available at <http://www.stripes.com/news/pacom-not-waiting-on-politics-to-plan-for-climate-change-challenges-1.297433>
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- 6 Title 22 funds are appropriated to the U.S. Department of State, which can transfer them to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), which in turn manages and executes most security assistance programs. Title 22 includes Foreign Military Sales programs. Title 22 is often considered less flexible, primarily because Congress authorizes and appropriates these funds on a by-country and by-program basis, and requires congressional notification and permission to move funds from one effort to another. Title 10 funds are appropriated to DoD and are intended for operations and maintenance of the U.S. military. These funds are often used to fund international participation in U.S. joint exercises, military personnel exchanges, or military-to-military contacts as a way to enhance the relationships between partner militaries and U.S. forces.
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