

Lessons from Security Assistance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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Security Assistance Exemplar

- **A case where an armed group rose up against a U.S. partner:**
- The government had for years marginalized a minority population group in terms of participation and services;
- The group acquired modern equipment by capturing it from an unsound but U.S.-supported government force;
- The military employed indiscriminate use of force and denied justice to that group, undermining the force's legitimacy and leading to grievances that fueled the conflict;
- A neighboring country served as a sanctuary, allowing the group to better train and gain resources;
- The group benefitted from seasoned military leadership, despite the group being marginalized in the nation's security forces;
- The resultant uprising was a repeat occurrence: while a previous conflict was quelled, the underlying factors leading to conflict were not addressed;
- The collective result of these factors was an armed group that, with only a small group of personnel, was able to defeat a national security force, capturing territory and equipment.

Security Assistance: the Good, the Bad, the Ugly

- Observation: security assistance efforts often do not reinforce long term U.S. national interests or those of the partner nation.
- Effects can range from:
 - Effects of security assistance providing a negligible effect on the capacity and capability of our partners, to
 - Allowing security risks to the US from weak states and from non-state actors to go unmitigated.
- Three case studies show a range of security assistance efforts and their effects:
 - Mali
 - Philippines
 - Colombia
- These case studies illustrate both some factors to be considered in security assistance and some different approaches that can be used.

Mali – background (1)

- Traditionally a nomadic and fiercely independent people, the Tuareg have sought autonomy from the government of Mali since the state's inception in 1961, occupying a portion of northern Mali (Azawad).
- Throughout late 2011 and early 2012, an estimated 2,000-4,000 seasoned Tuareg fighters returned to this region after serving in Libyan militias prior to the fall of the Qaddafi regime.
- In October 2011, Tuareg fighters and elements of other groups in northern Mali formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA).
- In January 2012, the MNLA separatists began a series of rebellions, attacking towns in the Gao region and quickly gaining control of territory throughout northern Mali. Additionally, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), along with other Islamist extremists operating in northern Mali, temporarily formed an alliance of convenience with the separatist rebels.

Mali – background (2)

- Malian President Touré sent elements of the Mali Armed Forces (MAF) to northern Mali hoping that a show of force would cause the Tuareg to abandon their rebellion and deter the Islamist extremists.
- The Tuareg, partnered with Islamist groups and heavily-armed, well-trained, and experienced from their years in Libya, proved to be more than a match for the MAF.
- The MAF suffered a string of defeats at the hands of the combined Tuareg-Islamist forces; one by one, MAF garrisons in the north were surrounded and forced to surrender.
- This inability of the government to support its troops in the field adversely affected public opinion and created animosity within the MAF. In March 2012, disgruntled elements within the MAF turned against the military and civilian leadership, culminating in a coup d'état that removed President Touré and placed an Army captain at the head of the government.

Security Assistance: Learning from Failure in Mali

- Until the March 2012 coup, Mali was viewed as an example of the success of democracy in Africa.
- However, despite a decade of US government (USG) efforts to build capacity, the Mali government and its military forces were unable to counter the separatist rebels and terrorist threats they faced, and the democratically-elected government was overthrown by a handful of disgruntled military personnel.
- A study was conducted to examine factors that contributed to the less-than-effective security assistance effort in Mali.

Failure in Mali: Contributing Factors (Mali)

- There were a number of factors that played a role in Mali's poor showing against the Tuareg-Islamist threat it faced, including:
 - **Lack of national ownership.** The Mali government did not take ownership of its challenges; it lacked the political will to dedicate the resources and efforts required to address key issues.
 - **Lack of institutional capacity.** Mali was one of the poorest nations in the world, highly dependent on international aid and support. That said, the government of Mali mismanaged its resources and lacked a competent bureaucracy for effective governance. The military force was hollowed by corruption and lack of professionalism.
 - **Long-standing grievances.** The government of Mali did not effectively resolve grievances dating back to pre-independence.
 - **Lack of perceived legitimacy.** Though the US and other international observers saw Mali as a “democratic success,” the government's legitimacy among the population suffered because of corruption and human rights concerns. This aggravated existing grievances and contributed to the coup.

Failure in Mali: Contributing Factors (U.S.)

- Factors on the U.S. side included:
 - **Lack of US unity of effort.** The US did not achieve unity of effort in Mali due to its disparate strategies, policies, and plans; differences in US organizational cultures, roles, and missions; the multitude of program funding streams; and conflicting authorities.
 - **Mismatch in national interests, goals, and threats.** The US saw Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as the major threat to security in Mali and the region. The government of Mali viewed the Tuareg as its most pressing concern.
 - **Tactical focus without a corresponding level of institution-building effort.** US security assistance focused on building tactical-level capabilities; however, the US did little institutional capacity building to enable Mali to effectively use or sustain those capabilities.
 - **Assessments gap.** There were no credible monitoring and evaluation programs in place to effectively assess whether US capacity-building programs were attaining their desired goals and objectives.

Case Study: Philippines

- The Philippines is a 7,000-island archipelago with a long history of insurgencies over the past 500 years
- Internal resistance groups can be roughly divided into two camps:
 - Insurgencies rooted in religion (specifically, Islam)
 - Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), **Moro Islamic Front (MILF)** and **Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)**
 - Insurgencies stemming from political conviction (specifically, communism)
 - Hukbalahap (“Huk”) and New People’s Army (NPA)
- Underlying factors that fueled internal insurgencies also made the Philippines attractive to trans-national terror organizations (e.g., **Jemaah Islamiah [JI]**)



Khadafi Janjali

Timeline for Philippine Developments

- Events:
 - 2000-2001: Under new leadership, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) shifted to kidnapping and demanding ransoms in order to finance operations and emphasize its demands for a separate Islamic state
 - March 2000: ASG kidnapped over 50 students and teachers from two schools in Basilan; four hostages were killed
 - April 2000: ASG militants kidnapped 21 persons, including 10 Westerners, from a resort island, Sipadan, in Malaysia; Libya paid ASG a \$20 million ransom for their release
 - Early 2001: Philippine President Arroyo asked USPACOM for assistance
 - May 2001: ASG took 20 hostages from the Philippine island, Palawan; three hostages were American – one was beheaded a few days later
 - November 2001: President Arroyo and US President Bush agreed to a plan of action to improve the ability of the Philippines to combat terror
 - US would provide military assistance and economic aid
 - US forces would deploy to the Philippines to “advise and assist” the AFP

U.S. Approach in the Philippines

- After 9/11, initial planning for CT operations on Basilan included a course of action for a maritime JTF to conduct US combat operations on the island
- The course of action was discarded as the Philippine Constitution forbade direct combat operations by other nations. SOCPAC developed an indirect approach to achieve US objectives and conform to the requirements of the Philippine Constitution
- The initial focus of US forces, under Task Force 510, was to train the AFP, to include combined training exercises, basic rifle marksmanship, and platoon/company base defense and maneuver, in order to increase AFP's proficiency against terror elements of concern to the US, specifically JI and ASG
- In 2006, US forces transitioned to a smaller footprint with JSOTF-P and shifted its mission from training to solely advise and assist the AFP. JSOTF-P transitioned from supporting tactical AFP CT operations to a more operational level focus

Progress in the Philippines

- As of 2012 (when assessment was done), the majority of JI / ASG high value individuals (HVI) in the Philippines were captured / killed. JI and ASG terrorist groups in the Philippines were:
 - Isolated in smaller geographical areas
 - Increasingly ineffective, with uncoordinated leadership
 - Unable to effectively recruit personnel, garner significant financial support, or conduct significant operations
- By 2012, AFP had graduated to become more capable of conducting independent HVI operations. Their operations took into account legitimacy and human rights concerns and enjoyed greater support from the population.
- Since then, it is clear that this progress has not been sustained.

Philippines: A New Operational Approach

- Driven by political pressure, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) realized that scour tactics were strategically counterproductive and reformed their approach
 - Historically, the Philippine forces were seen as heavy-handed in their operations
 - The AFP changed their approach to a focus on the population through the use of civil-military operations (CMO) plus the use of focused operations
- The change in approach was enabled by a new focus on avoiding civilian casualties and gross human rights violations, a change driven by Philippine leadership
- This two-pronged approach simultaneously countered terrorist leaders and addressed underlying factors that gave rise to insurgent movements and terrorist sanctuaries

Progress in the Philippines illustrated that “constraint is a weapons system”

The Philippines: Exemplar

- *MILF resorted to kinetic operations after a 2008 Supreme Court ruling threw out the proposed terms of a negotiated peace accord. The AFP responded with restraint and consideration of the population, establishing camps for displaced persons and providing food and water when needed.*
- *This behavior was driven by AFP General Officers who were emulating US special forces activities*
- *The response from the population was positive, and AFP were seen as protectors of the population, building trust and aiding their overall campaign.*
 - *“[Civil military operations are] more lethal than brute force” – Deputy CDR, MILF*
 - *Example: Abu Soleiman, ASG Chief, was killed after a tip from a local on Jolo island who was impressed by civil military operations and care for the population provided by AFP*

Limitations to Security Assistance in the Philippines

- US special forces provided focused attention and direct problem solving to specific areas affecting Philippine capability to provide security and stability
 - HVI direct action, civil-military operations, intelligence, mentoring and leadership, enabling prosecution around a weak justice system
- Transition to a larger interagency approach did not sustain or institutionalize observed improvements
 - Starting in 2012, US Embassy country team approach appeared to be “build a CT program portfolio” instead of focused problem solving regarding specific challenges facing the Philippines
 - Direction of planned interagency effort did not sustain or reinforce progress made in the Philippines through OEF-P
- Recent developments show erosion of progress in Philippine institutions

Colombia: A Case Study

- In the late 1990s, US leadership were concerned about Colombia becoming a failed state in light of the FARC and other armed opposition/illicit trafficking groups.
- Today, Colombia is much improved:
 - Security situation better
 - FARC capabilities and end strength reduced
 - Government negotiating with FARC from a position of strength
 - Human rights groups acknowledge improved civilian security

What Colombia Did: Four Elements

- Colombia
 - Took ownership of its security and social issues, including the national will to act and dedication of resources
 - Used an evolving approach to promote effectiveness in its operations against armed opposition groups such as the FARC
 - Made efforts to consolidate government presence over its territory
 - Regained legitimacy in its use of force, including human rights considerations

National Ownership

- Colombia:
 - Recognized that problems existed and needed to be addressed.
 - Exerted political will to deal with its problems.
 - Two rounds of a ‘war tax’ to help finance efforts (2002 and 2006).
 - Extradition treaty with the U.S.
 - Constitutional and legal reforms.
 - ~50+ billion dollars spent since the beginning of Plan Colombia
 - Used its economy and resources to help fund its transformation, and asked for help from others.

Adapting for Operational Effectiveness

- Colombia's evolving approach and efforts to strengthen its security forces promoted effectiveness in its operations against armed opposition groups such as the FARC. Specifically, Colombia:
 - Fortified, expanded and professionalized its military
 - Established specialized units
 - Evolved its approach over time, including changes based on enemy adaptations

Expanding Governance

- Efforts to consolidate government presence over its territory by:
 - Securing the local population and gaining their support
 - Placing troops in local communities
 - Employing effective information operations, and civil-military operations
 - Promoting the rule of law: pairing law enforcement capabilities with military operations.
 - Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives.
 - Longer-term efforts to consolidate government presence and address root causes of the insurgency (economic conditions and land reform).

Legitimacy and Human Rights

- Colombia revised its rules of engagement and took steps to improve compliance to international humanitarian law (IHL) and accountability for gross human rights violations:
 - New rules of engagement better addressed the dual threat of armed opposition groups and illicit trafficking
 - Beginning with President Pastrana in 1998, human rights and compliance to IHL was emphasized throughout the military.
 - The “false positives” scandal in 2008: a continuing problem, additional reforms.
 - An improved record since 2008 strengthened Colombia’s legitimacy and promoted operational effectiveness through improved intelligence from the population.

What the U.S. Did in Colombia

- The United States played a key role in Colombia's progress.
- We used a “full-spectrum” approach to security assistance:
 - Tactical training (typical)
 - Provision of niche capacities to enable more effective Colombian operations (sometimes novel)
 - Institution building
- Principles of our approach in Colombia differed from typical security assistance:

Colombia	Typical
Persistent	Shorter time frame
Constant presence	More episodic
U.S. Embassy as an Interagency Command Post	Lack of unity of effort across US government
Massing of resources	Less consistent

Colombia Security Assistance: Bigger Picture

- Net cost
 - U.S. contributions to Plan Colombia were about \$8 billion overall.
 - While significant, this can be less costly than military operations in a theater of war (e.g., 1 percent of the cost of operations in Afghanistan).
- Longer-term sustainment
 - Shows that persistent effort can improve host nation institutions, building up the capacity of weak states.
 - This can lead to sustainable progress as a long-term dividend to US expenditures.
- Potential leadership of the partner nation in the region
 - For example, Colombia now exports security and training to its neighbors in the region, a further dividend of US efforts.

Overview: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

- Three case studies show a range of security assistance efforts and their effects:
 - The Ugly: the coup in Mali
 - The Bad: real progress in the Philippines but not sustained
 - The Good: progress in Colombia which is now an exporter of security assistance
- A few takeaways:
 - Tailoring efforts to specific partner capabilities and weaknesses (sometimes in novel ways) enhances operational effectiveness
 - Interagency cooperation was strong in U.S. support to Colombia, and weaker in other two cases
 - When partner institutions are not included in efforts, progress can be temporary
 - Promoting legitimacy lays the groundwork for longer term sustainability and can also promote operational effectiveness

References

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