

Testimony
Before
the House Armed Services Committee,
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

Department of Defense's Role in Foreign Assistance

Statement of

Jason Ladnier

Director, Office of Partnerships, Strategy, and Communications
Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations
U.S. Department of State

Wednesday, July 11, 2018

Chairwoman Stefanik, Ranking Member Langevin, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on how the Department of State (State), the Department of Defense (DoD), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) work together to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance, generally and particularly in conflict-affected environments.

State works closely with other parts of the U.S. government (USG) as well as many international and non-governmental partners to respond to some of the most challenging, complex global crises. Today, I will highlight how State engages with DoD and USAID to help ensure that we maximize the effectiveness of our respective resources in the realm of stabilizing conflict-affected areas in order to further our national security interests.

Just to put this into perspective, the USG government wide effort to furnish foreign assistance internationally is led by the Secretary of State, who is vested with the broad overarching responsibility and statutory authority for the continuous supervision and general direction of U.S. foreign assistance, including security and economic, under the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act and many other statutes providing comparable responsibilities for securing direction from the Secretary of State. For the purpose of furnishing all such USG assistance, there is intense interagency coordination among key USG agencies, including USAID which is a key implementer of US foreign assistance as well as with DoD which is involved with implementing a wide range of its authority, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State. For these purposes, the furnishing of assistance government-wide is subject to open and competitive bidding and procurement procedures, and the USG welcomes involvement of vetted US NGOs and contractors, as appropriate, and consistent with relevant law and regulation. Through leadership and coordination, State seeks to maximize the impact of foreign assistance by strategically aligning resources to foreign policy goals; measuring what works; and promoting evidence-based policies. We appreciate Congress' continued support in this regard.

An integrated, whole-of-government approach is essential to maximize the impact of U.S. foreign assistance resources and advance our foremost foreign policy interests. State works with all the different U.S. government agencies and departments that manage foreign assistance,

including DoD, to align our efforts toward common goals and metrics. State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) convenes interagency stakeholders and promotes coordinated approaches throughout the formulation, allocation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the foreign assistance budget. Our Chiefs of Mission also play a crucial role in promoting the integration of all bilateral USG assistance at the country level. The Chief of Mission should concur on all bilateral USG assistance provided in their country. State and USAID work with our embassies and missions abroad to maintain Integrated Country Strategies, which provide a framework to guide all interagency efforts.

Likewise, State, USAID, and DoD also work closely together at the field level to ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of foreign assistance and associated diplomatic and defense engagement. At the strategic level, the Bureau of Political Military Affairs provides approximately 90 Foreign Policy Advisor positions to DoD in over 30 locations globally, and receives 98 Military Advisors in return. At the operational and tactical levels, bureaus may often contribute their own liaisons to combatant commands and other units they with whom regularly coordinate with. Using Conflict and Stabilization Operations as an example, they maintain a Senior Conflict Advisor within the U.S. Africa Command's J5 Directorate for Strategy, Engagements, and Programs, and have previously assigned a counter-Boko Haram field representative to coordinate between special operations forces and multiple U.S. missions in Africa's Lake Chad Region. Regular exchanges for training exercises and institutional education, such as U.S.-Australia Exercise Talisman Sabre or U.S. Army Special Operations Command's Jade Helm serves to build inter-organizational relationships and understanding, and familiarize each organization with the other's priorities and planning processes. Engagements which span the levels of warfare and being in training environments ultimately pay dividends in contingency operations.

A coordinated State-USAID-DoD approach is particularly important in contingency environments marked by fragility, extremism, and violent conflict. Many of our assistance resources focus on responding to complex crises; from Colombia to Nigeria to Somalia to the Philippines. As this Committee knows, global conflict-related challenges have become

increasingly complex and intractable. At the same time, taxpayers are rightly demanding tougher scrutiny of how we spend these resources and avoid open-ended commitments.

Cognizant of these challenges, State, USAID, and DoD last year launched the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR). The SAR identified ways that the United States can best leverage diplomatic engagement, defense, and foreign assistance resources to stabilize conflict-affected areas. The final SAR Report – approved by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and USAID Administrator, and released last month – reflects hundreds of expert interviews, case studies, and analysis of spending and conflict data. It outlines a coordinated framework for targeting U.S. efforts to stabilize conflict-affected states based on our national security interests and an assessment of where we can have the greatest impact.

Perhaps most importantly, the SAR report affirms that stabilization is an inherently political endeavor. To better align USG diplomatic, defense, and foreign assistance efforts toward political goals and objectives, the SAR report defines lead agency roles for stabilization efforts: with State as the overall lead agency for stabilization efforts, as with US foreign assistance generally; USAID as the lead implementing agency for non-security stabilization assistance; and, DoD as a supporting element, to include providing requisite security and reinforcing civilian elements where appropriate.

In all of these efforts, we work closely with a range of partners. The United States is committed to pressing our international partners to increase their share of the costs for responding to shared goal challenges and to holding our local partners accountable for demonstrating sustained leadership and progress.

We also work closely with non-governmental and private sector organizations as we pursue and implement programs on the ground. In line with federal regulations, State, USAID, and DoD identify implementing partners through open and competitive processes. This is important to help ensure that we achieve the most cost-effective result for the American taxpayer. As the Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) for the Senate's Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) states, the Administration recognizes the value of U.S. charitable

organizations and situations where closer cooperation with the U.S. military would be beneficial. However, the SAP also notes objection to the relevant provisions as it would provide preferential and unlimited access to DOD personnel, funds, and assets to implement non-governmental organizations' missions. State, with the Administration, looks forward to working with the Congress to shape these provisions in NDAA so that they are consistent with established best practices of humanitarian assistance, to include appropriate State Department and USAID oversight.

A chief consideration when evaluating any prospective partner is that they recognize the authority, guidance, and red lines that may be set by a Chief of Mission, as policy improvisation by partners or prospective partners can be antithetical to the most effective alignment of policy, strategy, and resources, and intended outcomes.

When evaluating prospective partners, we also consider that close association between non-governmental organizations including non-federal entities may create a perception that neutral humanitarian NGOs are party to military operations. We seek to avoid any associations that would pose significant security risks to organizations for whom neutrality is fundamental to their ability to operate in contentious environments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.