
MANY COUNTRIES BENEFIT FROM U.S. ANTITERRORISM TRAINING

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The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA) has trained over 25,000 foreign police and security forces from 117 different countries in measures designed to combat, deter, and solve terrorist crimes in their countries. ATA Director Alan O. Bigler says that "in the process the program is improving both bilateral and international cooperation in the fight against terrorism."

The U.S. Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA) is actively training foreign police and security forces throughout the world to combat, deter, and solve terrorist crimes in their countries. In the process the program is improving both bilateral and international cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Since its inception, ATA has trained over 25,000 students from 117 different countries, which has had a sizable impact in the fight against international terrorism. In the year 2000 alone, ATA trained 2,741 students from 42 countries (conducting 117 courses in 20 different subject categories), initiated programs in five new countries, participated in 11 technical consultations and conferences, conducted five program evaluations, and performed 20 needs assessments. In the coming years, especially in light of the recent horrific terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, ATA will undergo a major program expansion and is planning accordingly.

During the early 1980s following several serious terrorist incidents throughout the world, it became evident that in countries where such incidents had occurred, many local police and security forces lacked the necessary expertise and equipment to deter and respond in an effective manner. Therefore in 1983, the U.S. Congress authorized the establishment of a special program designed to enhance the antiterrorism skills of friendly countries by providing training and equipment necessary to deter and counter terrorist threats. Congress established the Antiterrorism Assistance

Program under an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which provides its legislative mandate and assigns responsibility for its administration to the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS).

DS Agents, who are sworn federal law enforcement officers, serve as the Regional Security Officer (RSO) at U.S. embassies and other diplomatic missions throughout the world. In this capacity, they are responsible for the security of U.S. facilities and personnel inside the embassy compound, and for ensuring the safety of personnel beyond its walls, including all U.S. citizens that may travel to or visit that country. In order to manage these responsibilities, an RSO must establish and maintain close contacts and working relationships with the host country's security officials, who are tasked with providing external protection and support to the U.S. embassy and staff under long-established diplomatic protocols. Where gaps in a country's capability are noted, the ATA can offer expert assistance.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IS FIRST STEP

At the embassy's request, and with the concurrence of the Department of State and with the consent of the host country, ATA will send a team of subject matter experts (SMEs) to conduct an extensive and thorough needs assessment of the country's security and police forces. Drawing experts from federal, state and even local law enforcement agencies, ATA sends teams to

provide a critical look at the host nation's key security and law enforcement units. In conducting a needs assessment visit, the experts will frequently meet with senior government and police officials, visit various units, talk to members of the police, and witness capabilities demonstrations in order to determine the type of training and equipment the country will need to meet its particular terrorist threat.

The assessment team considers five basic areas, which are seen as fundamental in any nation's defense against terrorism. Collectively they establish the framework for determining a country's ability to deter and respond to terrorist threats. In general terms, this framework involves the government's ability to:

- Enforce the law, preserve the peace, and protect life and property;
- Protect its national leadership, the seat and functions of government, and its resident diplomatic corps, including that of the United States;
- Control its international borders;
- Protect its critical infrastructure; and
- Manage crises that have national implications.

Upon return, the SMEs compile a report that is presented to ATA's Training Board for review. In addition, a comprehensive country plan is developed that outlines a specific program of training courses and equipment for that country.

Specific assistance is designed to meet identified needs in a variety of police and internal security disciplines. This assistance program is intended to improve functional police skills, mid-level supervision, senior-level management and leadership.

TRAINING IN FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

Essentially, ATA training is divided into four separate functional categories: Crisis Prevention, Crisis Management, Crisis Resolution, and Investigations. Each of these four categories contains a number of courses. For example, training in the category of Investigations is provided through a number of specialized courses, two of which are Post-Blast Investigations and Terrorist Crime Scene Investigations, while training in the category of Crisis Resolution

could be in the form of a course in Hostage Negotiations.

The bulk of antiterrorism training is provided in the form of highly specialized courses conducted in the United States at one of ATA's several training locations. Course lengths vary from two to five weeks, depending on the subject. Typically, class sizes are held to no more than 24 students. Professional instructors teach courses with simultaneous interpretation into the country's native language by highly experienced interpreters. In addition, course materials are translated into the native language and alphabet, providing students with reference materials they can retain for future use after their return.

In addition to the standard package of courses available, ATA also provides specialized training, consultations, and advisory assistance to address significant security threats. Based on specific, compelling needs, this assistance is often in the form of police administration, management and planning, police instructor training, judicial security, and modern interview and investigative techniques.

ATA also provides limited amounts of specialized equipment. The majority of this equipment is incidental to the courses provided. For example, students who attend the bomb disposal course are given render-safe tools during their training, which they return home with. In addition, where there is a compelling need, and when funds are available, ATA is authorized to provide specialized equipment to meet pressing needs. Although it is presently limited in scope, ATA hopes to expand its equipment grant program in the future to meet the specific needs of its participant nations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

A country's human rights record is a critical element for ATA participation. In full compliance with the Leahy Act, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor participates in determining a country's eligibility for participation. Assistance may be suspended if the country's record of human rights practices falls below acceptable standards. U.S. embassies scrupulously screen proposed training

candidates to ensure that no abusers of human rights or officials involved in corrupt practices are permitted to attend training. In addition, ATA instruction incorporates and stresses human rights values and practices in its courses through teaching modern and humane treatment of suspects and members of the general public encountered during police operations.

NEW INITIATIVES

Anti-Kidnapping

In response to a widespread problem of kidnapping for ransom in Colombia and several other Latin American countries, ATA is developing a comprehensive anti-kidnapping training program. The new training program will begin with a kidnapping incident management course that brings together expert instructors with extensive experience in the field to teach a country's security forces, police and government agencies how to manage an incident of kidnapping for ransom. ATA anticipates there will be a great deal of interest in this type of training.

Pipeline Security

In response to concerns expressed by several Central Asian countries, ATA is developing a course that will teach energy pipeline security. Given the vast petroleum resources in the region, and the need for an extensive pipeline network for export, the governments of this region are increasingly concerned with their security. ATA hopes to have a pilot course available within the near future to help address their concerns.

Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

A major new area of training for ATA addresses the problems of managing the effects of a terrorist attack using chemical, biological, or radioactive materials, which are referred to as WMD. Such attacks present significant problems that are new, different, and of much greater scope than terrorist incidents involving conventional weapons.

Courses have been developed and implemented to train foreign "first responders" — police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and emergency room staff — to cope with

the complications of responding to terrorist attacks using chemical, biological, or radioactive weapons. These types of attacks can be more deadly than the 1998 massive truck bombs that destroyed the U.S. embassies in East Africa and the recent attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. The ATA "first responder" program mirrors the U.S. Government's domestic program. As much as possible, the training and equipment will be the same as that provided to first responders in the United States.

Terrorist Financing

The ATA program, working with experts in other agencies, is developing programs to help foreign officials to counter terrorist fund raising. In recent years, international terrorist organizations have relied less and less on state sponsors for their financing and other material support. However, many of these groups have founded charities and service organizations as fronts through which they seek contributions from people who believe they are for legitimate purposes. Some terrorist groups also operate legitimate businesses as front companies to raise money or facilitate transfers. A course designed to teach investigators how to trace, follow and link terrorist groups with their funds has been developed and was presented to a test country in July 2001. This pilot course was very well received and should become available for general offering.

ATA Results and Impact

ATA training provides the participant country police and security forces with a cadre of trained officers familiar with American values and thinking, on whom the RSO and other U.S. officials can rely in times of crisis. ATA training has also been widely credited with increasing the confidence, and in turn, the professionalism of students who have completed the training. In many countries, follow-up program reviews have determined that these officers have not only grown in skill and confidence, but also have advanced beyond their peers in promotion and stature due to the knowledge and training gained from their ATA training.

In addition to providing individual students with enhanced training, there are numerous examples where

ATA training has directly thwarted or solved several major terrorist incidents or major crimes. For example, in one country, ATA-trained police, using the techniques they learned during Surveillance Detection training, arrested two terrorists with a bomb in their possession outside the home of a judge. In another, an ATA-trained Police Crisis Response Team was deployed to the presidential palace of a country during an attempted coup d'etat, thus thwarting an overthrow of the government. In still another, a graduate of the ATA course in Police Crisis Management was called upon to

respond to a crisis situation at a nightclub that was firebombed with 13 people killed and numerous others injured. This officer attributes his ATA training in crisis management as key to his ability to handle the subsequent panic and confusion of the situation.

Connecting with ATA

To learn more about ATA, the program office operates its own Internet Web site, which can be found at <http://www.diplomaticsecurity.org>. ©