

# **Combating Terrorism: The Role of USAID and Development Assistance**

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In the post September 11 world, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been called upon to play an increasingly prominent role in the War on Terror.<sup>2</sup> The Agency's humanitarian and development assistance programs, especially when directed toward at-risk populations and regions, have been recognized as critical components in the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT) and its accompanying National Implementation Plan-NIP. These programs can play a crucial role in denying terrorists sanctuary and financing by diminishing the underlying conditions that cause local populations to become vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. Moreover, USAID programs directed at strengthening effective and legitimate governance are recognized as key tools to address counterinsurgency (COIN).

Historically, USAID supported national security objectives by providing humanitarian assistance as well as fostering long-term economic and political development in the developing world. However, a changing international environment meant USAID was increasingly tasked with responding not only to humanitarian crises such as floods and famines, but also to complex emergencies in places like Somalia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and more recently, to crises in Sudan, Afghanistan and now Lebanon. Increasing government-wide recognition of the importance of development in shoring up states prone to instability and vulnerable to terrorism led to its designation as the third "D" in the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy. This designation made development – along with diplomacy and defense – one of the key pillars of national security. The Strategy notes that "development reinforces diplomacy and defense, reducing long-term threats to our national security by helping to build stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies."

This change in doctrine led to both internal and external changes at USAID. Internally, a White Paper identified instability and conflict, which are present in many of the countries where USAID operates, as conditions terrorists seek to exploit. The White Paper noted the need for shorter-term, "conflict-sensitive" programming to stabilize these environments before the Agency's longer-term, traditional development programs can be implemented. In 2003, USAID established the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) to lead the Agency's efforts to better identify the underlying causes of instability, conflict and extremism and to design programs to ameliorate them.

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<sup>2</sup> Similarly, USAID is engaged with others in the interagency on the issue of COIN and how development is part of the full-spectrum COIN response.

The 2002 National Security Strategy also emphasized a “whole of government” approach to the Global War on Terrorism. Although various USAID offices, such as the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), have worked with the Department of Defense (DoD) and other federal agencies to conduct humanitarian assistance, stabilization, and reconstruction operations, the new strategy determined that a more holistic, integrated development-defense-diplomacy approach was required. Recognizing the need for a USAID-specific entity to support this integrated interagency approach, USAID established the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) in 2005. Its mandate includes serving as the focal point for interactions between USAID and the Department of Defense; improving USAID’s capacity to work with federal government and other actors in synchronized, national-security programming; and helping develop USAID positions on national security issues. The Office is staffed by former military officers, Foreign Service officers, and subject matter specialists.

These internal and external changes have already produced a number of interagency initiatives in which USAID expertise is playing a key role in denying terrorists sanctuary and financing and diminishing the underlying conditions that spawn terrorist recruits, including violent extremists. Some examples of these initiatives include the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) and newly planned joint counter-extremism projects in the Horn of Africa (HOA).

Launched in 2004, the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) targets extremism, instability, and violence in the Sahel region of Africa. Supported by USAID’s West Africa Regional Mission and several country missions and embassies, the State Department, USAID and DoD’s European Command (EUCOM) conducted joint assessments in several Sahelian countries to identify causes of extremism and terrorist recruitment. A number of factors, including remoteness, porous borders, proximity to known terrorist groups, large marginalized and/or disenfranchised populations, and exclusion from political processes were identified as key causes of instability in the region. Programming recommendations from the assessments led to targeted interventions in Mali, Niger and Chad. Examples of such intervention include: youth development, former combatant reintegration, education, rural radio and media programs, peace-building/conflict management, and small-scale infrastructure projects (e.g. well drilling, school construction). USAID’s TSCTI advisor maintains regular contact with EUCOM regarding the implementation of these programs.

In the Horn of Africa, USAID, the State Department, and the Combined Joint Task Force for Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) are collaborating on a number of counter-extremism projects.<sup>3</sup> These projects are based on a USAID-funded assessment that examined the causes of extremism and identified the most unstable areas in the region. To implement these initiatives, CJTF-HOA is building or rehabilitating essential infrastructure, such as schools, clinics and wells (hardware), while USAID is providing educational and medical training and resources, developing instructional materials, and building institutional capacity (software).

As an illustration, USAID’s East Africa Mission (USAID/ESO) based in Nairobi, teamed with CJTF-HOA to rehabilitate 10 clinics and hospitals in the urban and district capitals of Djibouti.

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<sup>3</sup> Field-based interagency discussions have concluded that extremism rather than terrorism is a greater threat in the Horn of Africa. “Terrorism” in the HOA is primarily directly at internal concerns and conditions and the link to the GWOT is tenuous whereas extremism threatens regional stability.

CJTF-HOA carried out the physical rehabilitation and USAID provided health care training to local health care providers. This integrated programming is facilitated by improved interagency communication. Examples of this integration include CJTF-HOA staff regularly participating in USAID project planning meetings and USAID representatives accompanying Civil Affairs Teams (CATs) in their planning and programming activities.

In addition, OMA and CMM, along with other USAID offices, are developing a Tactical Conflict Assessment Framework (TCAF) to be used by the U.S. Military in conflict zones. The TCAF has grown out of CMM's Conflict Assessment Framework methodology and is intended to provide the U.S. Military with a practical tool for identifying the root causes of conflict in their particular area of responsibility as well as guidance on adjusting their programming in order to more effectively address those causes. The TCAF will contain diagnostic questions targeting local populations' potential incentives for violence, it will have detailed directions for Military Personnel on how to collect answers to these questions, will provide illustrative project examples and information on funding sources for potential follow-on interventions, as well as a cultural awareness guide.

The TCAF was initially field tested in late June 2006 as part of a Field Training Exercise (FTX) in Fort Bragg, NC. This FTX represented the first time that USAID had trained with U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel and provided a valuable opportunity to bring development-oriented conflict-sensitive approaches into an integrated interagency planning process. Representatives of all offices in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) participated in the exercise. Due to the success of this joint exercise, it is anticipated that USAID and the Department of State will participate in future FTXs with the U.S. Army.

Lastly, on June 29, 2006, the Deputy Commander of U.S. Central Command and the Assistant Administrator of DCHA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the exchange of Liaison Officers between USAID and DoD's U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). The objective of this exchange is to foster communication and understanding between the two organizations as well as to strengthen planning and operations through improved coordination. The Liaison Officers from USAID, called Senior Development Advisors, will share what USAID has to offer in terms of resources and capabilities for stability operations, conflict/crisis situations, humanitarian assistance, and longer-term programs for weak and fragile states. USAID Senior Development Advisors are already in place at EUCOM and SOCOM. A Senior Development Advisor has been selected and will soon be posted to PACOM.

Although this level of collaboration is relatively new, it is moving forward at a rapid pace with many joint interventions, tools, and strategies being molded into shape. It will take time for joint collaboration to fully develop between the agencies and surely the relationships will continue to evolve as time progresses and needs change. However, USAID welcomes these opportunities to partner with relevant government agencies and offices within agencies, such as State's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). Together, the agencies will be able to fulfill their mandate in the Global War on Terror and assist in linking development, diplomacy, and defense to create a safer world for everyone.