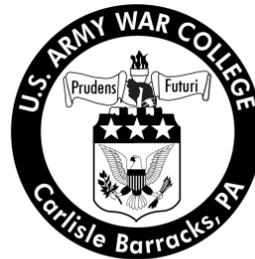


The National Guard State Partnership Program: Element of Smart Power

by

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Army National Guard



United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 03-09-2012		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The National Guard State Partnership Program: Element of Smart Power				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel James N. Williams				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Oliver Norrell Department of Command, Leadership and Management				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: proved for public release distribution is unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT As the nation confronts its current economic crisis, the Department of Defense faces budget reductions between four hundred billion and one trillion dollars over the next ten years. Yet in spite of constrained resources the United States must continue to meet National Security challenges in this "era of persistent conflict". The strategy to meet these challenges and overcome diminished capacity will rely more heavily than ever on security cooperation, engagement and building partner capacities. Gaining security cooperation and aiding partner nations to develop themselves is a way to shape the environment, deter conflict and assure access and assistance in the event of conflict. For nearly two decades, the National Guard State Partnership Program has done all of this and more. Since long before the term "smart power" was coined, the State Partnership Program has evolved, almost imperceptibly, as a means to employ a "whole of society" approach to building partner capacity. This paper will demonstrate that the State Partnership Program is an effective and economical tool that facilitates a bridge between military engagement and civilian diplomacy in support of the National Security Policies of the United States.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Security Cooperation, Engagement, Building Partner Capacity					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			UNLIMITED	28	

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:
ELEMENT OF SMART POWER**

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel James N. Williams

TITLE: The National Guard State Partnership Program: Element of Smart Power

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 9 March 2012 **WORD COUNT:** 5,621 **PAGES:** 28

KEY TERMS: Security Cooperation, Engagement, Building Partner Capacity

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

As the nation confronts its current economic crisis, the Department of Defense faces budget reductions between four hundred billion and one trillion dollars over the next ten years. Yet in spite of constrained resources the United States must continue to meet National Security challenges in this “era of persistent conflict”. The strategy to meet these challenges and overcome diminished capacity will rely more heavily than ever on security cooperation, engagement and building partner capacities. Gaining security cooperation and aiding partner nations to develop themselves is a way to shape the environment, deter conflict and assure access and assistance in the event of conflict. For nearly two decades, the National Guard State Partnership Program has done all of this and more. Since long before the term “smart power” was coined, the State Partnership Program has evolved, almost imperceptibly, as a means to employ a “whole of society” approach to building partner capacity. This paper will demonstrate that the State Partnership Program is an effective and economical tool that facilitates a bridge between military engagement and civilian diplomacy in support of the National Security Policies of the United States.

THE NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM: ELEMENT OF SMART POWER

...we must foster even deeper connections among Americans and peoples around the globe. Our long-term security will not come from our ability to instill fear in other peoples, but in our capacity to speak to their hopes. And that work is best done through the power of the decency and dignity of the American people – our troops and diplomats, but also our private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and citizens. All of us have a role to play.

—Barrack Obama¹

As the nation confronts its current economic crisis, the Department of Defense faces budget reductions between four hundred billion and one trillion dollars over the next ten years. Yet in spite of constrained resources the United States must continue to meet National Security challenges in this “era of persistent conflict”. The strategy to meet these challenges and overcome diminished capacity will rely more heavily than ever on security cooperation, engagement and building partner capacities. Gaining security cooperation and aiding partner nations to develop their capabilities is a way to shape the environment, deter conflict and assure access and assistance in the event of conflict. For nearly two decades, the National Guard State Partnership Program has done all of this and more. Since long before the term “smart power” was coined, the State Partnership Program has evolved, almost imperceptibly, as a means to employ a “whole of society” approach to building partner capacity. This paper will demonstrate that the State Partnership Program is an effective and economical tool that facilitates a bridge between military engagement and civilian diplomacy in support of the National Security Policies of the United States.

The Strategic Environment

The world has changed in unexpected ways since the end of the cold war and the fifty year period of relative stability that was a hallmark of the bi-polar world. With the fall of the Soviet Union at the close of the twentieth century, many in the United States anticipated that the nation might enjoy a peace dividend as a result of the end of the cold war. That illusion was shattered on a clear September morning in 2001, when the very symbols of U.S. greatness and power, the World Trade towers and the Pentagon, were attacked by a relatively small group of militant Islamist radicals operating from a sparse and remote part of the world. What ensued was over a decade of extended combat in two major theaters, one on Iraq to overthrow a dictator believed to possess Weapons of Mass Destruction, and another in Afghanistan to disrupt, dismantle and defeat the Al Qaeda terrorist network that carried out the attacks against the United States, and to remove an illegitimate Taliban regime that provided the terrorists a safe haven.

The United States has now concluded its campaign in Iraq and has redeployed those forces. With the assistance of the United States and other nations, the responsibility for the continued development of a free Iraq rests with the Iraqi government and its people. Similarly, in Afghanistan the Taliban has been routed, Osama Bin Laden killed, and his Al Qaeda network badly damaged and dispersed. Now, the focus has largely shifted from combat operations to developing the capacity of the Afghan Government to take responsibility for its own future.

While it is too early to tell whether either of these operations will achieve the desired long-term results, it is certainly clear that the political landscape in the broader middle-east has been reshaped. In the wake of these campaigns, the human desire for

freedom has led to popular uprisings across the Arab world in what has become known as the “Arab Spring” or “Awakening”. Revolutions have occurred and repressive governments were overthrown in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, where the long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi was killed by opposition forces. Civil uprisings have occurred in Yemen, Syria and Bahrain and elsewhere in the greater middle-east. Where this leads is uncertain.

Rising powers such as China, Brazil, India and others seeking to enhance their position in the world also present challenges and opportunities for the United States. What is certain is that the strategic environment for next several years will remain volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, “VUCA” in strategic parlance. Civilization has grown more interconnected as well as interdependent, as “individuals, corporations, and civil society play an increasingly important role in shaping events around the world.”² Modernization and rapid advances in transportation and information have also created opportunities and challenges, as well as threats, to peace and security. Paradoxically the very tools which create this interaction and interdependence are also the vehicles with which a variety of actors, state and non-state alike, seek a position of advantage over their competitors, sometimes violently.

Climate change, overpopulation, poverty, unemployment, youth population bulge, and competition for scarce resources will add to the pressures and tensions on people and governments across the globe. From bellicose powers that either possess or seek nuclear weapons, such as Korea and Iran, to militant extremist ideologues, rogue states and international criminal enterprises, all have the potential and the capability to threaten peace and stability at any point on the globe.

So while the United States has emerged from the cold war period as the lone super-power in the world, it nonetheless faces challenges in ways and from actors that could hardly be imagined a short decade ago. As former Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in his 2009 testimony before congress, "Beyond (Iraq and Afghanistan), one of the greatest dangers we continue to face is the toxic mix of rogue nations, terrorist groups, and nuclear, chemical or biological weapons."³ One thing is abundantly clear; the world has become infinitely more complex and volatile, and the United States, along with its allies, will be engaged in a long struggle to protect its interests and its people.

Yet as that struggle continues there are domestic political issues, particularly the economic crisis, that also affect the environment. There should be little doubt about the impact of the impending reduction in resources on the military's capacity for contingency operations in the future. To what degree military capabilities will be degraded is unclear. Suffice to say that the National Command Authority will exercise considerable judgment and prudence regarding the large-scale committal of armed forces for the foreseeable future. The ability of the United States to defend the homeland, respond to threats and provide humanitarian assistance around the world will depend on an effective strategy to meet and overcome challenges during this period of constrained resources. Building relationships with partners and enhancing the capacity of those partners are keys to any such strategy.

Developing a Strategy to Meet the Environment

Despite an historic record of failure to accurately anticipate events, the United States must nonetheless adopt a strategy that enhances the ability to shape events rather than react to them. One of the common threads within all of the recent National Security Strategy documents is the imperative to develop and enhance security

cooperation based on developing partnerships around the globe. Indeed, the word partnership appears in the 2010 National Security Strategy 44 times, up from 16 times in the 2006 edition in the Bush administration and up from 7 times in the 2002 edition.⁴

In the 2010 document, President Obama stated that “Our ability to advance constructive cooperation is essential to ... security and prosperity... and to facilitating global cooperation on issues ranging from violent extremism and nuclear proliferation, to climate change, and global economic instability—issues that challenge all nations, but that no one nation alone can meet.”⁵

Former Defense Secretary Gates also articulated this in his 2008 National Defense Strategy: “The security of the United States is tightly bound up with the security of the broader international system.”⁶ The Secretary also referred to “promoting international security to reduce conflict and foster economic growth and [secure] the global commons.”⁷

Clearly, the United States realizes that its ability to face the multitude of global challenges unilaterally is limited. But any discussion about developing partnerships must go beyond the obvious need to enhance military capabilities. Attaining long term security for the United States ultimately depends on establishing a more peaceful and prosperous world. This can only be accomplished by spreading opportunities for people to live under governments that respect human rights, the rule of law, and individual freedom to achieve one’s own potential. Working towards that end requires much more than what military efforts alone can accomplish. What is required is a mix of developing military capabilities to ensure security while also improving economic, political and social capacity – what is commonly referred to as a “whole of government” approach or,

even more broadly, a “whole of society” approach. President Obama spoke to this approach in the 2010 National Security Strategy.

We will pursue engagement among peoples - not just governments - around the world...through efforts ranging from public service and educational exchanges, to increased commerce and private sector partnerships.⁸

Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has also championed this approach. In the first ever State Department “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review” (QDDR), Secretary Clinton espoused a mix of military (hard power) and diplomatic (soft power) as a so-called “smart-power” approach to resolving global issues. The Secretary addressed diplomatic initiatives that “involve many disparate parts of the U.S. government”, and further said that diplomats “have to be prepared to go beyond the state to engage directly with new networks, from the private sector to the private citizen.”⁹

The President’s vision was also echoed in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review. Referring to prevention and deterrence and “America’s enduring effort to advance common interests without resort to arms”, former Defense Secretary Gates acknowledged the need for the integrated use of the elements of national power and other “tools of statecraft” to help build the capacity of partners and promote stability.”¹⁰ The Secretary also stated that the Department of Defense was “committed to further improving a whole-of-government approach to national security challenges.”¹¹

Similarly, the six Geographic Combatant Commanders (COCOMs) have underscored security cooperation and building partner capacity as essential to their respective Theater Strategy Plans and Country Campaign Plans in support of National Security objectives. In every COCOM posture statement the reader will find references

to the importance of the concepts of cooperation, engagement, and building partner capacity. “Security Cooperation” is defined broadly as interactions between the Department of Defense and foreign militaries that promote specific United States security interests; develop allied and friendly military capabilities; and provide the United States with both peacetime and contingency access to host nations.¹² Typical security cooperation and engagement activities include military-to-military contact, coalition training, nation assistance and long term operations. These types of activities range from Navy ship port visits to combined training exercises, foreign military education, leader conferences, foreign military sales and counter-drug operations.

Thus there is a clear theme common to the strategic guidance documents regarding National Security. Building solid partnerships through engagement develops alliances, builds partner capacity and assures access for contingency operations. However, military-to-military and even military-to-civilian contacts are insufficient for addressing the broader issues that breed conflict. As the President has said, “Successful engagement will depend upon the effective use and integration of different elements of American power. Our diplomacy and development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance.”¹³

What is needed is an institution which can facilitate the integration of the many disparate activities required to effectively build partner capacity beyond across all domains. While no such body currently exists within our government there is, fortunately, one established institution that may serve as a model for integrating the

efforts of disparate agencies. That institution is the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

The State Partnership Program

"The State Partnership Program (SPP) is a Department of Defense (DoD) security cooperation program run by the National Guard."¹⁴ The program grew out of an initiative known as the Joint Contact Team Program established in 1992 by the United States European Command (USEUCOM) as a means of "minimizing instability and encourage democratic governments."¹⁵ Originally carried out by active component personnel, the National Guard became involved largely out of the host government's desire for reserve-centric defense forces and "to assuage Russian concerns about U.S. expansion into its former satellites."¹⁶

The mission of the State Partnership program is to "enhance combatant commander's ability to establish enduring civil-military relationships that improve long-term international security while building partnership capacity across all levels of society."¹⁷ Essentially, the program pairs the militaries of partner nations with the National Guard of a particular U.S. state. The original intent of the program was to develop relationships and to assist in reforming the defense establishments of the former Soviet states, primarily through military-to-military engagements which also provide valuable training for the National Guard.¹⁸

The first partnerships were established in 1993, pairing New York with Estonia, Michigan with Latvia, and Pennsylvania with Lithuania. Today the program involves 63 partnerships with 70 countries throughout all six Geographical Combatant Commands, with more countries requesting participation. Virtually all of the fifty-four U.S. states and

territories are involved in the program, with some states having more than one partner nation.

The program directly supports Security Cooperation activities designed to develop relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests; develop allied and friendly capabilities for self-defense and multi-national operations; and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access abroad.¹⁹ In terms of the Global War on Terror, there should be little doubt that the United States received valuable assistance at a critical time as a result of the State Partnership Program. Some partner nations provided troops for direct employment, and in a number of instances they deployed alongside their National Guard counterparts. Others filled peacekeeping missions to relieve coalition partners for duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, or provided critical basing and logistical support, as well as intelligence sharing. In terms of the Global War on terror, clearly, the State Partnership Programs meets the military objectives of security cooperation.

Yet while the original focus was on military-to-military training exchanges, over the years the program has taken on more of a “whole of government” approach based on the needs and desires of the host nations. Some of the other activities are military-to-civilian events, termed “inter-agency activities”, primarily involving training in military support to civil authorities, including training in law enforcement and response to man-made and natural disasters, “but can include other areas of cooperation and capacity building.”²⁰

While the SPP is a DoD program, it is managed in concert with the State Department and all activities abroad are conducted with the approval or concurrence of

the various Ambassadors or Chief's of Mission as well as the Geographic Combatant Commands. In this way, activities are coordinated so that unity of effort is assured relative to the corresponding Theater and Country Campaign Plans and the Mission Strategic Plans of the State Department. Through this coordinated effort, the SPP supports the goals of the various departments and agencies' nested strategies in support of National Security Objectives.

Additionally, there are also some concurrent non-military engagements involving civilian-to-civilian activities. Typically these involve "education, medical, legal, business and professional exchanges." These events are often facilitated, or arranged, through the SPP but funded through other means such as "the state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private resources, or by another federal agency." However, these activities are coordinated through and endorsed by the U.S. Ambassador (to the host nation) and briefed to the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC).²¹ According to the National Guard Bureau, "the typical SPP event is a week-long subject matter expert exchange, with three to five National Guard subject matter experts participating, with an average cost of approximately \$20,000."²²

The State Partnership Program has morphed itself over nearly two decades from a tool for developing military professionalism and capacity to something more attuned to the President's vision outlined in the 2010 National Security Strategy. Through natural progression, and the needs of the partner states, the program today also functions as a bridge between the diplomatic efforts of federal and state governments and quasi-government and non-governmental agencies. In short, the SPP has been facilitating a "whole of society" approach to engagement as envisioned by the President and others

for many years. It could be said that the SPP has, perhaps inadvertently, identified a gap in our previous diplomatic efforts. And while SPP may not have the capacity to bridge that gap entirely, it is certainly a model for further expansion of citizen-diplomacy.

SPP as a Diplomatic Multiplier

Using the National Guard as a primary tool to develop relationships with potential allies is a diplomatic multiplier, and its utility across the various domains of diplomacy was recognized after only a few years of effort. In a 2002 article in the *Washington Quarterly*, former Colorado Governor Bill Owens touted the State Partnership Program as a proven approach for “strategic democracy building.”²³ Governor Owens was one of the first to document the SPP’s “quiet achievements” in facilitating the development of emerging democracies beyond the typical military-to-military exchanges. For perhaps the first time, under SPP state governments became involved in helping the federal government in achieving diplomatic goals abroad.

By 1995, the program had expanded its scope to include “multifaceted engagement activities...in the social, economic and military spheres.”²⁴ In cooperation with state and municipal agencies, the program provided assistance and training in “emergency management, disaster relief operations, civil and criminal justice, judicial processes, and law enforcement.”²⁵ As a result of these engagements over time, more informal relationships developed. “Through SPP, many countries have established successful governmental, educational, and medical relationships with counterpart agencies from the partner states.”²⁶

This is the greatest advantage of the State Partnership Program. Because of the dual-status nature of the National Guard as both a federal and a state agency, manned by citizen-soldiers, it is only natural for relationships to develop beyond the military

aspect of the partnership. The citizen-soldiers of the National Guard are natural ambassadors for the American people, who also happen to have military skills. And while their military skills are the primary tools for engagement, their civilian skills and experiences also add intangible factors that enhance these interactions with their counterparts.

National Guard soldiers are more closely tied to their families and their communities than the typical active component soldiers living on large bases. They also have a certain local perspective that they bring to the table and, all politics being local, citizen-soldiers understand issues that are important to the common man, his family and his community. It is from this perspective that sincere and lasting relationships are developed with their counterparts.

Governor Owens was not the only state executive to understand the value of the State Partnership Program. Former Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton not only understood the program's inherent value, she also saw vast untapped potential for further public and citizen diplomacy. In 2010 she chaired a roundtable discussion calling for more citizen-diplomacy, using SPP as a model for what she described as a "State Partnership Framework" to facilitate increased contact at the state and local level. In the report of the discussion, the SPP was recognized by Lieutenant Governor Lawton as one of two existing, trusted state institutions (the other being state universities), that "are ideally positioned to develop a strategic hybrid of public and citizen diplomacy in fifty states."²⁷

The conference's focus on the potential role of the citizen and the individual states in shaping U.S. foreign relations goes straight to the heart of the potential of SPP.

While public diplomacy is government-centric, citizen diplomacy, through face to face personal encounters, carries “greater credibility with foreign audiences.”²⁸ Some suggested areas for state facilitation of citizen diplomacy include education, economic development, science and technology. While the forum was centered on citizen diplomacy and the role of the state, it was clear the State Partnership Program was recognized as having already transcended the gap between government and citizen diplomacy.

The ability to establish enduring relationships is a unique attribute of the National Guard. “The SPP model has proven successful in building and sustaining enduring and trusting strategic partnerships in environments where conventional U.S. government efforts may not be as effective. Individuals in leadership may change, but the commitment of a state National Guard as a more intimate, accessible, and agile partner than a national entity – has proven to be reliable for partner countries.”²⁹

Conference participants included representatives from the Departments of Defense and State, as well as academia. Among the notable attendees was Reta Jo Lewis, State Department Special Representative for Intergovernmental Affairs, who also touted the program’s role in diplomacy. Although the federal government, not the states, has the responsibility for conducting Foreign Policy, Ms Lewis remarked that networks of state and local leaders can help the Department of State to “establish durable foreign partnerships...at the sub-national level.” “Sometimes the personal relationships that are created through the SPP can have a stronger and more intimate connection than those we establish at the national and diplomatic level.”³⁰

Overall feedback regarding the impact of the program is very much positive. By nearly all accounts, SPP is an essential, effective and economical tool for pursuing National Security objectives. With 41 of 62 embassies surveyed responding, all but one agreed that “SPP was valuable in helping meet [the] post’s goal and objectives.”³¹ Several Combatant Commands have also commented favorably on the program. In a recent interview, U.S. Army Pacific commander, LTG Francis Wiercinski, stated that “developing cooperative security is what I do every day...building partner capacity has to be on our minds constantly...even the smallest exchange pays huge dividends.” Overall, the General said he thought SPP was a great program that, in his view, was extremely cost effective, and should be continued and even expanded.³²

Referring to SOUTHCOM’s 28 state partnerships, GEN Douglas Fraser, Commander U.S. Southern Command, feels that the program is extremely important, noting that having the National Guard as the lead agent allows for more interagency collaboration, “you can cross some interagency [lines].”

They’re immensely important, and one of the biggest reasons is it gives us the capacity to provide the capability that we wouldn’t have otherwise. You can cross some interagency [lines] because of the experience with the Guard. I’m a big supporter of SPP and I look forward to working alongside the Guard for many more years. It’s an enduring relationship.³³

Issues for Further Consideration

While it is quite apparent that the State Partnership program is an integral component to the National Security Strategy, there are issues that require further consideration in order to guide the program towards its full potential. The general sense one gathers from the August 2011 Congressional Report on the State Partnership Program is a need for more standardization. As the program has evolved over the years, each Geographic Combatant Command and each individual partnership has

established their own procedures and/or interpreted existing regulatory language in accordance with their distinct partnerships. This has led to concerns about the program relative to the use of funds for civilian participation, integration with Combatant Commanders and Ambassadors priorities, and “encroachment” on Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) responsibilities, among others.³⁴

While standardization of regulations, authorities and approval procedures is in most cases both necessary and desirable, care must be taken so as not to constrict the ability of the program to address the discrete needs of the individual partner countries. SPP is not a one size fits all program. While its origins are in the former Soviet states of Eastern Europe, there are partnerships today that are quite literally spread across the globe. Obviously then the partner states as well as the partnerships themselves are at different stages of development and each has unique needs. While more developed countries may require assistance to advance the capabilities of their disaster preparedness, for instance, others may have more basic needs such as developing essential infrastructure and institutions.

Any new directives, regulations or statutory authorities would be most effective with a “bottom-up” approach, using input from the National Guard to the greatest extent possible. Given the vastness and diversity of the programs requirements, the coordinators at the National Guard Bureau level should be the “trusted advisors” to ensure that language incorporated into evolving guidance ensure the flexibility required to administer the program effectively “where the rubber meets the road.”

The Bureau can most effectively synthesize the discrete nuances across the program into a cohesive representation for the further development of directives and authorities. Without initial input from the program level, any top-driven attempts to develop guidance will ultimately fail to achieve the balance and flexibility required to effectively administer the program. The National Guard Bureau has had over twenty years experience with this program and is the only single agency that truly has the “big picture.” The Bureau is more than capable of fairly and honestly representing the needs of the partner nations consistent with the requirements of the Department of State, the Geographic Combatant Commanders and the American taxpayers.

One area that would benefit from standardization is the appointment and employment of the individual officers selected to coordinate the programs of the various individual states and territories. Presently, the appointments are made by the states but the funding and employment is a function of the Combatant Commands, and each manages them differently. Some encompass two to three year tours while others are on orders for six months at a time with the potential for renewal.³⁵

In general terms, each partnership has two state National Guard officers to manage the program. One is the state SPP coordinator who typically resides within the state’s National Guard headquarters. The other is the known as the Bilateral Affairs Officer (BAO) or in some cases “Traditional Commanders Activities coordinators” or TCA’s, depending on which Geographic Combatant Command they work in. This officer typically resides in the partner nation and works in the U.S. Embassy there. Working with the GCC’s, the Embassy and the state SPP coordinator, this officer synchronizes

the activities of the program locally. Some nations do not have this position, and in such cases the state SPP coordinator travels to the partner nation to effect coordination.³⁶

Building stable personal relationships is key to the success of the SPP. Stabilization of personnel promotes the associations and continuity required to achieve effective cooperation over the long term. Tours for SPP officers should be for at least two years and, where feasible, should be offered as “accompanied” tours (with family) in order to expand the opportunity and attract a wider group of well qualified candidates. The family aspect would make a substantial contribution to the mission by expanding and deepening the relationship beyond the military partnership into the cultural dimension. The cost of ensuring adequate staffing for each partnership is far outweighed by the long term benefits of the program towards achieving National Security objectives.

With respect to concerns over funding for civilian participation, the issue may be more one of perception as it is appropriateness. In the past, some questions have arisen about whether civilian participation was “outside the scope of the statutes involved.”³⁷ This perception may be due to the origins of SPP as a more of a military-to-military program, and does not take into account the previously mentioned evolution into other areas of required support. Any true whole of society approach to developing partner capacity necessarily requires civilian involvement and participation, both U.S. and Foreign.

The Congress appears to have recognized this need, and has provided authority in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Section 1085 of the Act allows for \$3,000,000 to pay for travel and per diem costs associated with the participation of

United States and foreign civilian and non-defense agency personnel in conducting activities under the State Partnership Program of the National Guard.³⁸ The 2012 NDAA, P.L. 112-81, was signed into law by President Obama on December 31, 2011.³⁹

This legislation is necessary in order to accommodate individuals from quasi-government and non-governmental agencies and institutions who can make significant contributions to enhancing the capacities of the partner nations. Among these might be experts and practitioners in the fields of medicine, education, law enforcement and corrections, fire and rescue first responders, judiciary, and economic development to name but a few.

As with any country, the U.S. included, security begins with stable democratic institutions and infrastructure, as well as a vibrant economy which offers hope and opportunities for its citizens. Civilian participation is therefore an evolutionary and necessary element of the State Partnership Program. The National Guard Bureau is entrusted to be the good stewards of the people's resources and ensure that aspect of the program is administered appropriately and effectively.

Regarding concerns over integration with priorities of Combatant Commanders and Ambassadors, positive steps to diminish this unease are in effect both in law and in practice. The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1210, specifies that "funds shall not be available...for activities conducted under the State Partnership Program in a foreign country unless such activities are jointly approved by the commander of the combatant command concerned and the chief of mission concerned."⁴⁰ SPP coordinators are entrusted to ensure that proposed activities meet the U.S. government's goals and objectives and are approved prior to execution.

Additionally, interagency integrators at the combatant command levels can help to ensure unity of effort in achieving the goals of the Combatant Commander's Theater Campaign Plans and the Ambassador's Country Plans. In 2001, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ordered the establishment of Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG's) in order to better coordinate efforts in the Global War on Terror. The purpose of the JIACG is to "bridge the gap between civilian and military campaign planning efforts."⁴¹

More recently new directorates, known as Outreach or Partnering Directorates (J9), were added to command staffs to coordinate these efforts. Some of these positions are staffed by DA civilians. In a recent interview the U.S. Pacific Command's (PACOM) J9, Mr. Michael Ritchie, said that the State Partnership Program was extremely valuable, and that he saw the program as "the connective tissue for the whole of government approach, and it needs to continue to expand."⁴² Mr. Ritchie's comments, like so many others, are a tribute to the "reach back" capability that the National Guard brings to the global security cooperation and diplomatic effort.

Building on Success

Those states with the longest lasting partnerships, the former Soviet states of Eastern Europe, have perhaps benefitted most from the program. Many have since joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Membership in NATO requires a number of stringent conditions, and there can be little doubt about the contributions of the SPP in helping partner nations meet those conditions which led to achieving member status.

In general terms, the European continent is stable and the U.S. military presence is on the verge of further reductions. While these reductions are primarily budgetary

decisions, it is doubtful this reduction in forces would be considered absent this relative stability. In light of this “steady state” in Europe, after more than twenty years and many success stories, it is perhaps time to review the status of existing partnerships and the types and frequency of engagement.

One option might be to phase out some of the most successful long-term partnerships in favor of new ones with partners that have more pressing needs. Perhaps some criteria need to be developed by which a partnership could be dissolved through mutual agreement – a sort of “graduation” from the program. On the other hand, longevity is and has been a key to success, and dissolving a partnership could open the door for potential decline in partner capacity.

A more reasonable approach might be to limit engagement to specific needs as broader goals are met. This would allow for flexibility of the limited SPP resources, particularly in full time staffing, to accommodate other nations that desire to initiate partnerships. In any event, there is a need in other parts of the world for the tremendous capacity that the State Partnership Program can bring to bear. A review of some long-term partnerships may reveal that the respective states are in a position to accommodate emerging democracies that desire to participate in the program.

Conclusion

While the total strategic environment in the first half of the twenty-first century is uncertain, it is assured to be one of increasing tensions that create the potential for conflict. Competitors and potential adversaries will seek to offset U.S. overmatch by employing Anti-access and Area Denial (A2/AD) measures. The grand strategy for the United States must be global engagement that seeks to shape events, improve

alliances and partner capacities, and influence the behavior of states and non-state actors alike.

Addressing the myriad issues that foment conflict in the world requires the application of “smart power”, a blend both hard and soft power. In addition to preparing for a wide range of threats and contingencies requiring hard military power, the United States military must also play a role in the application of this smart power. For nearly two decades the National Guard State Partnership Program has pioneered the application of a smart power, using a whole of society approach to improving security cooperation and partner capacity. The citizen-soldier aspect of the SPP brings unique capabilities and opportunities to develop partner capacities that are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve at the federal.

In order to meet the security challenges of the 21st century, relationships will matter. The National Guard State Partnership Program has a history of establishing long-term, stable relationships that have served the Geographical Combatant Commanders and the nation well in advancing our national interests. Properly resourced and employed, the State Partnership Program will continue to be an effective and efficient tool for developing security cooperation and partner capacity well into the future.

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