

**Security Sector Reform: Current Challenges and US Policy****By Alix J. Boucher and Madeline L. England**

On June 4, 2009, the Future of Peace Operations (FOPO) Program at the Stimson Center hosted an expert workshop on security sector reform (SSR). The workshop showcased Stimson's current work in the area and featured presentations by the FOPO research team, officials from the State Department, USAID, and the National Defense University. This issue brief discusses the US definition of SSR, provides a brief overview of Stimson work in this area and then discusses the US State Department's work to support SSR, particularly in Africa. It concludes with a discussion of requirements for effective SSR, as agreed upon by program participants: to be effective, SSR programs should be comprehensive, cooperative, and coordinated among donors and host nations.

**Box 1:*****Workshop Discussion Sessions******Panel I – Good Practices and US Policy*****William Durch**, Senior Associate and Co-Director, Future of Peace Operations Program, Stimson**Madeline England**, Research Associate, Future of Peace Operations Program, Stimson**Julie Werbel**, Senior Security Reform Advisor, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID***Panel II – Lessons from the Field*****Michael Bittrick**, Deputy Director, Office of Regional and Security Affairs, Africa Bureau, Department of State**Julie Chalfin**, Foreign Affairs Officer, Office of Regional and Security Affairs, Africa Bureau, Department of State**Sean McFate**, Assistant Professor, College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University**What is Security Sector Reform?**

The event began with a presentation of the US interagency guide on SSR.<sup>1</sup> The guide is based on the work of an interagency community of practice with representatives from USAID, the State Department and the Department of Defense (DOD). The SSR guide is an interagency statement that defines terms, delineates areas of responsibility, and presents a framework for moving policy and practice forward. It defines SSR as

<sup>1</sup> US Department of State, US Department of Defense, US Agency for International Development, *Security Sector Reform*, Washington, DC, February 2009, [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/democracy\\_and\\_governance/publications/pdfs/SSR\\_JS\\_Mar2009.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/SSR_JS_Mar2009.pdf).

the set of policies, plans, programs, and activities that a government undertakes to improve the way it provides safety, security, and justice. The overall objective is to provide these services in a way that promotes an effective and legitimate public service that is transparent, accountable to civilian authority, and responsive to the needs of the public.<sup>2</sup>

Most such definitions for SSR include two important elements: governance and change management, or what to aim for and how to achieve it. The US document adds two other components: an emphasis on effectiveness and legitimacy and a comprehensive definition of the components of the security sector, which includes uniformed personnel and civilian management and oversight bodies (which includes the judiciary), as well as non-state security and justice providers. The latter groups are among those the US government is trying to better understand.

The document's first major guideline is that SSR efforts should be "designed to meet the needs of the host nation population and to support host nation actors, processes, and priorities" and so generate national ownership.<sup>3</sup> In the past, the United States has paid lip service to this idea but has not determined what it really means or entails. National ownership is important, however, because it helps to make efforts more sustainable, effective, and legitimate, and to meet Congressional demands for accountability in assistance provision. Second, SSR programs should incorporate principles of good governance and respect for human rights. Third, efforts should balance operational support with institutional reform, which represents a shift in the US approach toward less top-down approaches to reform. Fourth, SSR efforts should link security and justice, foster transparency, and do no harm (that is, minimize unintended adverse effects).

The US guide emphasizes that, to be sustainable, SSR must also be adapted to each country's circumstances. In short, programs should be horizontal and fully integrated across the interagency. As such, it may be appropriate to change the terminology used for SSR and describe it as security system, rather than sector, because this would imply the involvement of a wider range of US actors. The lack of integration was reflected in US support to the development of the Kenyan Coast Guard, which was initially seen as a great success. Indeed, patrols were well-conducted, arrests lawful etc. The efforts faltered however, when coast guard officers released suspects to the police. Indeed, the Kenyan justice system is so corrupt that suspects often simply bribe their way out of detention. The program should have anticipated that it is not enough to build capacity in just a single area when that capacity is not matched across the board. Support needs to be provided throughout the security and justice system: the US should have provided Kenya with assistance in prosecution, detention, and judicial areas.

The authors of the SSR Guide have also created an interagency SSR Working Group. While additional agencies may yet join the group, a first priority was developing a policy statement. Publishing the guide was therefore an important first step. The Group is now turning to developing a consistent US SSR Assessment Framework. USAID has already developed an Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) which served as a basis for this effort, but an SSR Assessment Framework is also necessary to help measure the effectiveness of US engagement. Drawn from existing assessment frameworks, including the ICAF, the assessment framework will be based on a threat analysis. It also includes a programmatic framework and guidelines for analysis down through several layers of a bureaucracy. The assessment assumes that these types of efforts must be tailored to each country. It also cautions practitioners against forgetting the impact that donors themselves may have on the assessment and on the programs

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 9.

that flow from its findings. The assessment also addresses leverage points and entails both a risk and an impact assessment. Together, these tools will offer needed guidance for work in this area.

### Stimson's Work on SSR

The event also featured a presentation by Stimson research associate Madeline England on Stimson's ongoing support to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) on SSR. In late 2008, FOPO was asked by DPKO's SSR Team to gather and analyze best practices in security sector reform in six thematic areas:

- Defense Sector Reform with case examples for Afghanistan, DRC, Liberia, and Sierra Leone;
- SSR in stabilization environments with case examples for Afghanistan and DRC;
- Threat Assessments and Reviews with case examples for Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda;
- National Security Strategies and Policies with case examples for Liberia and Sierra Leone;
- Governance and Oversight of the Security Sector; and
- Management of the Security Sector, with case examples from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Afghanistan.

The team collected documents and conducted a series of interviews to gather not only strategic level views on SSR but also operational lessons learned. The team gathered data from 7 governments, 11 international organizations, and over 60 third party scholars and NGOs (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Governments, International Organizations, and Third Parties Consulted**

Governments (7)	International Organizations (11)	Third parties (66+; sample below)
Canada France Netherlands Norway South Africa United Kingdom United States	African Union Council of Europe ECOWAS European Union NATO Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) OECD OSCE SADC United Nations (HQ, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNODC) World Bank	African Security Sector Network (ASSN) Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Global Facilitation Network for SSR (GFN-SSR) Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) Institute for Security Studies (ISS) International Crisis Group (ICG) Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) United States Institute of Peace (USIP) RAND Saferworld Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

The result of Stimson's work is an SSR activities matrix on the six thematic areas. Finalized as an Excel document, it cross references over 900 SSR activities with 200 key source documents (drawn from a collection of more than 500). The matrix is intended for use as a living reference tool. Within the matrix, columns are grouped by source and rows are arranged by theme.

In collecting the data, Stimson faced several challenges, including a limited public literature on certain topics, uneven access to governments and their written policy statements, and short turnaround time for the requested product.

In addition to the matrix, Stimson has drafted notes on good policy and practice in each of the six thematic areas investigated.<sup>4</sup>

In collecting lessons learned, Stimson found that approaches to SSR varied amongst actors. Some NGOs, international organizations, and governments described their approaches to SSR in comprehensive terms. Others stressed the limitations of resources and personnel at their disposal and hoped, through coordination and cooperation with others, to build a more comprehensive approach to one or more of the six themes.<sup>5</sup>

### **Field Perspectives on Security Sector Reform**

The US government supports SSR in both post-conflict and steady state environments, but the two require radically different approaches and it can be harder than one might think to determine whether a country is ready for post-conflict type programs. Although the US has improved its efforts to support defense sector reform in particular, it needs to devote more attention and resources to the broader elements of SSR. It also needs to take a long-term view towards designing and implementing SSR programs, better-integrating them within wider development and security strategies. Finally, improvement in State's programs requires better mechanisms for learning lessons from previous and ongoing experiences.

#### *The State Department's Africa Bureau and SSR*

The Africa Bureau's work indicates that too little is known about SSR, its utility, its challenges, and its implications for donors. While SSR is a multi-disciplinary effort, some practitioners are not sufficiently familiar with the how SSR can or should fit into a development framework.

In Liberia, the US has spent over \$200 million on military reform.<sup>6</sup> On the military side, the US has made progress in developing tactical and operational capacity but needs to provide additional support for the police development program. In Somalia, the US is working to support the development of the Transitional Federal Government's (TFG) forces, but should also be providing assistance with vetting of personnel, and with logistics.

In South Sudan, as in other places, US efforts have suffered from lack of coordination both internally and with international partners. South Sudan also different because the North-South

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<sup>4</sup> The SSR database, along with the practice notes, can be accessed online at [www.stimson.org/fopo/ssr](http://www.stimson.org/fopo/ssr).

<sup>5</sup> The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), based in Paris, and the Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), based in Geneva, took particularly comprehensive approaches. UK authorities, which taking a comprehensive approach, also focused on SSR in stabilization environments. Other governments or government agencies were more specialized: Norway on governance, for example, and NATO and the US Department of Defense on defense sector reform.

<sup>6</sup> For more on US work in this area, see Alix Boucher, "Defense Sector Reform: A Note on Current Practice," and the case example on Liberia.

peace agreement between permits each to retain its own army. The intent is to integrate the two forces if the South rejects independence in the scheduled 2011 referendum. Experience in Angola has shown that integrating such forces requires major efforts to harmonize operating procedures, doctrine, training, and personnel management structures.

Across the continent, the US plans to support both police and military reform in the future. Doing so will remain a challenge, however, given existing US legal authorities that circumscribe activities to support police. While State and DOD have found ways to work within these limitations, the relevant authorities do make supporting reform complicated and burdensome.

*A Case Example: US Support to SSR in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

The State Department's DRC program includes defense, police, and justice components. State works with other international partners, including Angola, South Africa, the EU, and the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC). Some partners, such as China and Russia, are also becoming more involved. The EU in particular is working to develop a system to adequately pay the country's troops, which is a major program for the DRC. To support SSR in DRC, the US has worked at several different levels, from providing basic literacy training, to developing a military justice training program for military magistrates (including steps for investigating sex crimes), and providing battalion level training for officers in need of professionalization (training on military decision-making processes and human rights awareness, in particular). Finally, the US has provided advisors to the Congolese Minister of Defense as that office seeks to improve training across the country's military forces. Combined, these efforts attempt a holistic approach.

The US has faced several important challenges in providing SSR assistance to the DRC. The first is that, until the 2006 elections and the formal appointment of a government in 2007, State did not have a partner in the process. Second, the Congolese authorities have not always welcomed foreign (and in particular US) assistance and initiatives. Finally, the size of the Congolese Army itself, currently set at 160,000 troops, is not sustainable: the government cannot afford it. The process of integrating former rebel forces into the army itself is time consuming even though it lacks systematic vetting procedures; between vetting and meeting budget constraints, substantial numbers of troops will eventually be dismissed. Given the shortage of alternative sources of legitimate income in DRC, force reduction will likely itself generate security issues of its own.

*Defense Sector Reform in Liberia: How a Private Contractor Developed a Recruiting, Vetting and Training Program*

The example of defense sector reform in Liberia is not necessarily a model but rather a good case from which to glean some lessons. As part of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended 14 years of civil war and Charles Taylor's presidency, the international community agreed to demobilize and rebuild Liberia's armed forces.

Because the UN was unable to do so, the US agreed to fund the effort. After a team of 20 experts, mostly from the Department of Defense, spent ten days in Liberia to determine the required level of effort for the program, the State Department (which manages the security assistance budget) decided to outsource the work to Dyncorp. The program would involve demobilization of existing forces (state and rebel) and the recruiting, vetting and building of an entirely new government army. The program would also entail some policy design. The program assumed that the company would work with the local population and that SSR is a political process, i.e., exclusively technical approaches would likely fail.

In the initial phase, a team of RAND researchers worked with Dyncorp to assess the requirements of the program. The team determined that the greatest threats to Liberia were internal,<sup>7</sup> and that the best way to address them was not necessarily to develop a large military but to address economic development needs in the country. Based on this assessment, Dyncorp focused first on recruiting and vetting the new force. The Leahy Amendment requires extensive human rights vetting for potentially US-funded/recruited forces.<sup>8</sup> But in a country like Liberia, where there are no official records (those that did exist were destroyed during the war) and where many potential recruits were perpetrators of human rights abuses, finding acceptable personnel was a challenge, as was establishing their identity. As a result, a comprehensive and expensive vetting strategy was developed.

In conducting the vetting, during which Dyncorp investigated some 14,000 candidates using extensive field interviews and comprehensive human rights vetting, the company faced many unforeseen challenges. The first was the tension between security and justice, which are linked in principle but in some instances need to be decoupled if either is to be achieved. Granting amnesty is a possible solution, particularly as part of a recruiting process, drawing a line at the most egregious human rights violations (such as illegal killings) but allowing other individuals to join the forces.

During the recruiting and vetting process, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission requested access to Dyncorp records but program managers had promised to keep recruits' stories confidential. As a result, Dyncorp did not share its records, either with the Commission or with the UN. Finally, Dyncorp had no means to measure the effectiveness of its program.

***Conclusion: A Comprehensive, Coordinated, and Cooperative Approach to SSR?***

During the discussion, participants agreed that effective SSR programs tended to be comprehensive, coordinated, and cooperative.

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (where there is a UN peacekeeping mission on the ground) or the UN Development Program often express interest in coordinating SSR activities among donors. Participants agreed, however, that both have bureaucratic shortcomings. DPKO missions, for example, usually have a 6 to 12 month mandate, which, while often renewed, makes it hard for their leadership to focus on the long term.

Because local ownership is important, participants agreed that, in post conflict settings in particular, donors should look at each country separately and let local stakeholders step forward and adopt a leadership role. This means that different countries or organizations will take the lead in providing assistance in different places, as the UK did in training the military of Sierra Leone. A challenge remains when international organizations take the lead in such training. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, where the UN has the lead in training military forces, troops trained by different troop contributing contingents have learned the procedures of their respective trainers, down to how they salute and march.

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<sup>7</sup> Gompert, David C., Olga Olikier, Brooke Stearns, Keith Crane, and K. Jack Riley. 2007. "Making Liberia Safe: Transformation of the National Security Sector." Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, [www.rand.org/pubs/corporate\\_pubs/2007/RAND\\_CP521-2007-06.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/2007/RAND_CP521-2007-06.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> The Leahy Amendment in the 2001 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (Sec. 563 of P.L. 106-429) covers training and funding assistance, while the Leahy Amendment in the 2001 Defense Appropriations Act (Sec. 8092 of P.L. 106-259) covers only training.

In general, coordination requires communication and of course the development of a strategic arrangement with the host country. Managing these agreements is a challenge.

Finally, effective SSR, participants agreed, needs to be built into wider development programs. In post-conflict, resource-rich countries, where armed forces have traditionally exploited natural resources either to augment their budgets or for individual gain, this may require embedding SSR in natural resource management initiatives. Overall, however, this means that SSR needs to happen within a wider and long term development strategy.

The Future of Peace Operations program evaluates and helps advance US policy and international capacity for peace operations, and is directed by Stimson senior associate William J. Durch. The program team includes research fellow Alison Giffen, research analyst Alix Boucher, research associate Madeline England, research assistants Guy Hammond and Max Kelly, and Scoville fellow Jessica Anderson. Founded in 1989, the Henry L. Stimson Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution devoted to enhancing international peace and security through rigorous analysis and outreach. For more information, call 202.223.5956 or visit [www.stimson.org/fopo](http://www.stimson.org/fopo).