



Executive Summary

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BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY (BPC) IN AFRICA: KEYS TO SUCCESS

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Editor

The passage of the fiscal year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has far-reaching implications for the Department of Defense (DoD) in two particular areas for which this study is relevant. The first is that the legislation enacts sweeping changes to how the DoD and its components, including the Department of the Army (DA), budget, manage, assess, monitor, evaluate, and report their security cooperation activities to Congress. The legislation establishes a “single, comprehensive chapter in Title 10 of the U.S. Code,” dedicated to the reform of the DoD’s security cooperation practices. Further, as the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee notes, “the Department of Defense continues to place greater emphasis on security cooperation, to include building partner capacity [BPC].” By including the term “building partner capacity” in his comments on the law, the chairman uses a more comprehensive term that not only includes the security sector, but also widens the focus of security cooperation as a whole-of-government effort and makes clear congressional interest in treating security cooperation as a defense institution building endeavor.

In response to the congressional direction, four of the study’s chapters address directly the law’s intent and its provisions regarding security cooperation in general and Africa specifically. These chapters examine and offer recommendations on the following issues: (1) the concept of absorptive capacity, which the DoD considers the crucial first step in security cooperation planning regardless of the region involved; (2) professional military education (PME) in Africa as a defense institution building activity; (3) current security cooperation programming in Africa, its aims and outcomes; and, (4) use of public health engagement in Africa as a form of military-to-military engagement

and a capacity-building venture in support of the DoD’s policy regarding humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which contribute to regional stability and U.S. homeland security.

The second major area of the law that is of concern to the DoD focuses specifically on Africa and links directly to security cooperation activities in the region. Section 1273 requires the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, to submit to the congressional defense committees a “strategy for the U.S. defense interests in Africa.” The law indicates that the strategy must address: defense objectives in Africa; courses of action to achieve these objectives, to include cooperative efforts with other U.S. agencies; and “security cooperation activities to advance defense objectives in Africa.” This study points out that the success of security cooperation and defense institution building projects relies heavily on clearly defining U.S. policy objectives at the national, regional, and country levels, which is not currently the case among some of the departments and agencies involved in BPC. Moreover, the statute’s language includes a sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense needs to build a framework for security cooperation with foreign partners to “ensure accountability and foster implementation of best practices.” The final chapter assesses where difficulties exist in the interagency policymaking process that hamper the development of a collaborative framework and its implementation. Lastly, it defines what constitutes effective assessment, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure accountability, and offers relevant criteria for achieving the legislation’s purpose.

The FY 2017 NDAA is a watershed event for both security cooperation and for the Defense Department’s policy objectives with respect to its partners in Africa.

The law recognizes specific challenges and opportunities that the DoD must consider in developing a strategic approach on the continent that does not principally emphasize U.S. support to foreign security forces that assist in attaining U.S. counterterrorism objectives. This is not to suggest that the current U.S. policy goals or the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) lines of effort contained in its theater campaign plan are mistaken. However, in view of the law's provisions, the study proposes that the U.S. Government (USG) and the DoD concentrate security sector assistance in other areas where it can be effective in building and sustaining partner capacity over the long term as well as obtaining a reasonable return on investment and, at the same time, remaining consistent with wider U.S. foreign policy and defense objectives.

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