

Strategy Research Project

Increasing Interoperability and Preparedness through the State Partnership Program

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Abstract

Coalitions and partnerships with foreign nations is an increasing reality and interoperability with potentially unknown partners is required. The State Partnership Program provides the design, experience and depth to assist with this endeavor and its natural civilian oversight makes the strategic political connection to military and humanitarian assistance efforts stronger. This paper will explore the power of sustained relationships and idea sharing in relation to the National Guard State Partnership Program with the goal of reaching National Security Strategy end states. It will also make a case for logistical preparation of the battlefield through the program for both infrastructure improvement and economic development as part of a formula for improving nation building potential. Furthermore, it will address, as a first step, the ineffectiveness of the current means of State Partnership Program assessment and provide recommendations for measures of effectiveness based on national strategic outcomes. With a modest expansion of the variety of engagements, the SPP can contribute to success in setting the theater and become an integral piece to regional strategy.

Increasing Interoperability and Preparedness through the State Partnership Program

The Army Operating Concept is partially built upon the idea that United States (US) forces will be fully interoperable with coalition partners and that the US will be able to fight anywhere in the world.¹ This is a tall order for a military with uncertain budgetary availability badly in need of equipment modernization. Often, interoperability and integration are discussed in terms of systems: communications systems, weapons systems, cyber systems, etc. However, interoperability and integration with foreign militaries must reach further than equipment and systems to be successful. The US must attempt to create a forum for the sharing of ideas with hopeful coalition partners.

Not all concepts will work for all nations, but idea sharing without expectation can be a powerful tool for change. Additionally, long-term relationships built on cultural understanding and respect will increase integration efforts as well as facilitate idea sharing. Success in both these areas will naturally lead to logistical interoperability giving the US the ability to “fight in a complex world and win.”² The US no longer engages in that fight alone. Coalitions are required (practically, if not absolutely) for any military action outside our borders. The US military cannot effectively project power forward on land without partners, even if it is only for access. Therefore, the US must engage in relationship and capacity building with partners across the globe.

The National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) has continually received rave reviews from Combatant Commanders. Major General Frederick S. Rudesheim, US Army South Commander, called the program “almost incalculable.”³ Admiral James Winnefeld, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called it “one of the best foreign policy bargains our nation has.”⁴ Perhaps the most ringing endorsement comes from

Admiral James Stavridis, Former US European Command Commander, when he stated the SPP is, “a very powerful tool. It is unmatched. They are, bang for the buck, one of the best things going. Anything that enhances state partnership is money in the bank for the regional combatant commanders.”⁵ In fact, it is difficult to find a criticism of the program from anyone who has experienced it on the ground. Given such reviews, why would the US government not expand its model to include more interactions that would improve interoperability with partner nations?

The SPP model uses the power of American ideas and perpetuates them through personal relationships. Additionally, it can give the US the opportunity to improve infrastructure in various regions around the globe advancing our logistical readiness. However, the effectiveness of ideas and relationships are difficult to measure and too often, we choose not to. The Partnership Program is no exception. The program’s annual report shows measures of performance only and does not assess its effectiveness.

This paper will explore the power of sustained relationships and idea sharing in relation to the National Guard State Partnership Program. It will make a case for logistical preparation of the battlefield through the program for both infrastructure improvement and economic development. Furthermore, it will address the ineffectiveness of the current means of program assessment and provide recommendations for improvement.

The Power of Ideas, Relationships, and Being Prepared

Only history will tell if the success of the US is one that will last, but there is little doubt that the power it holds in the current international world order is unmatched. Whether we are watched in covetousness, fear, awe, or disdain--we are watched.

American power likely lies in a combination of realms that include economic, political and military components, but we should not discount the power of American ideas. The idea that liberty could act as a cornerstone for responsible government was one of America's first and greatest ideas. While there is much debate on whether democracy is a right fit for all nations, liberty in the form of self-determination is viewed as necessary for the liberal world order. President George Bush stated in his second inaugural address, "the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our land is the expansion of freedom in all the world."⁶ However, liberty is not the only American idea that resonates around the globe. Capitalism, free trade, and civic responsibility are all ideas that have found purchase in even the most unlikely global forums.

Ideas are not necessarily epiphenomenal, however. Ideas, often thought of as dependent variables, can also be independent in that the idea itself will play a role in the way people shape their environment.⁷ It is this concept that explains why decisions and changes that the United States makes are felt around the globe. Our ideas take on a cultural power of their own and become a useful tool in advancing the international world order. Given the power of our ideas, the US needs to spend conscious effort in sharing the good ones. The culture of ideas often spreads on its own; however, adding the power of a mutually beneficial relationship can increase the results.

The power of relational transactions is readily understood by most; however, Americans tend to apply the concept within their own cultural paradigms. This can be a dangerous practice, especially now that the US unipolar moment is at an end.⁸ Although the idea of unipolarity was generally accepted after the fall of the Soviet Union, perhaps

the US was never truly in a unipolar moment. The US has always relied on allies and partners to attain its goals when acting on foreign soil. Essentially, the US cannot accomplish power projection on land in the current liberal world order without assistance from partners. That assistance may take the form of merely granting access, but in most cases provides local industry and services and, in the best cases, labor and resources. These partnerships take time and effort to be effective and do not come without challenges such as that of alignment of interests and degree of commitment.⁹ Strong relationships with these potential partners will naturally reduce the friction of coalition creation.

Relationships with some level of permanence, nurtured over time, have a far greater likelihood of producing goal alignment and commitment that can overcome integration and interoperability issues. However, the way in which the US government manages foreign diplomatic relationships on various levels such as US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Foreign Service is very similar to the active military service in that individuals move from position to position throughout their career within an area of expertise. Both organizations' personnel systems are not organized in such a way to encourage long-term relationships. While the relationship between a given country and the US may be enduring, the relationships with individuals in the foreign diplomacy realm tend to be fleeting. Short-term assignments can be detrimental to relationship building and keep the US from realizing a full level of logistical preparation in these partner regions. In much the same way as the spread of ideas and building of long-term relationships helps to integrate with partners on a cognitive level, building partner capacity in a physical sense through logistical preparation and

infrastructure improvement can ensure interoperability. Having interoperability is important if we should find ourselves in a conflict or humanitarian assistance role in areas without a significant US or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) presence.

Michael Desch writes that military effectiveness is a “preponderance in the material power assets available to the state.”¹⁰ This availability includes both the equipment and supplies that a country brings to the fight and the supplies and access they are able to acquire in the regions where they are involved. The ability to set the theater prior to a conflict is paramount to the success of any long-term engagement. The Marine Expeditionary Unit is often the first unit to arrive in a theater in a crisis. It can sustain itself for only 15 days before it needs resupply.¹¹ Even when entire divisions enter a theater with full sustainment packages, all the supplies must travel along the local lines of communication and often rely on local labor at debarkation sights. Long-term sustainment of forces in theater requires compatible infrastructure and local contracts to be effective and efficient. The State Partnership Program is ideally suited to creating the relationships needed in countries throughout the world that increase our preparedness for conflict wherever it may arise.

SPP: History, Successes, and Limitations

The State Partnership Program is run by the National Guard Bureau in conjunction with the Regional Combatant Commands and each state’s Adjutant General (TAG). Its purpose is to engage with partner countries “in support of defense security goals but also leverage[s] whole-of-society relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader interagency and corollary engagements spanning military, government, economic and social spheres.”¹² This statement of purpose from the SPP website closely resembles the program’s original intent which was to help the former Soviet bloc

countries in the Baltics to form responsible and effective militaries under a democratic flag. At the time, both the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell and the Commander-In-Chief of European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander, General John Shalishkashvili felt that the National Guard presence in those countries would be less threatening to a newly weakened and nervous Russia.¹³ The program has expanded over the last twenty-four years to include seventy-three partnerships worldwide engaging in over 750 activities annually for less than \$13M.¹⁴

The original program had little oversight from Washington bureaucracy leaving the planning and execution of the programs to the state with approval from the combatant commands. Activities were in support of the military needs in the region and within the abilities and expertise of the Guard units that would be engaging in the interactions. However, the true benefit was in the longevity of the relationships built within the partnerships. It is not uncommon for a guard Soldier to have several interactions throughout their career with the same partner soldiers creating a bond that is very similar to that found within our own services. Evidence of this is readily seen in Vermont National Guard State Partnerships with Macedonia and Senegal.

Vermont was one of the first states to be paired as part of the SPP when it partnered with Macedonia in July of 1993. Then Lieutenant Colonel Michael Dubie explained a few years later, "It is often the informal contact between American citizen-soldiers and members of the armed forces of the host nations that help build trust and mutual respect between the partners."¹⁵ Dubie, who would later serve as TAG of Vermont and subsequently the Deputy Commander of United States Northern Command was an early proponent of the SPP. As the TAG, he was able to incorporate

Macedonian troops into the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) deployment to Afghanistan in 2009. The Macedonians were fully integrated into the brigade formation with little effort since the units had been learning and training together for more than 15 years.¹⁶ Also during his tenure as TAG, Lieutenant General Dubie fought for a second partner nation despite the relatively small size of the state's guard. Vermont paired with Senegal in 2008. However, Senegal has different needs than Macedonia, and current regulations restrict the interaction Vermont could have with their Senegalese partners. The informal contact that Lieutenant General Dubie saw as essential in the 1990s with Europe has been further hampered by more recent regulatory changes.

The current regulation, Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 5111.20 (2016), allows for activity between the US National Guard and,

- (1) The military forces of a foreign country;
- (2) The security forces of a foreign country; or
- (3) Governmental organizations of a foreign country whose primary functions include disaster or emergency response.¹⁷

However, many of the needs in developing countries in Asia and Africa exceed these limitations. According to the United Nation's (UN's) Sustainable Development Goals from January 2016, the most pressing issues in developing nations center around issues of poverty, hunger, childhood education, gender equality, and poor water and sanitation infrastructure.¹⁸ Additionally, the UN sights Africa and Southern Asia as the two regions with the most developmental needs.¹⁹ The Partnership Program cannot be responsible, nor is equipped to address all of the needs in these areas. However, the SPP could contribute to developmental improvement through modeling good

governance and education practices along with infrastructure improvement that would encourage economic development if operating with fewer restrictions.

In 2012, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted a review of the SPP and found that while all stakeholders found benefit in the program, it lacked a “comprehensive oversight framework that includes clear program goals, objectives, and metrics...”²⁰ In the years since, the Department of Defense has begun to refine the program goals and objectives but has failed to find a way to measure the effectiveness of both the exchange of ideas and the personal relationships built through the program, relegating the metrics to completed training events and numbers of visits. Counting the number of interactions does not get at the true value of the program, which is universally recognized by the combatant commanders.

The GAO’s findings had a secondary unintended consequence on the program that has further hampered its effectiveness. The report stated,

The most prominent challenge cited by State Partnership Program stakeholders involved how to fund activities that include U.S. and foreign partner civilian participants. Activities involving civilians, for example, have included subject matter expert exchanges on military support to civil authorities and maritime border security. Although DOD guidance does not prohibit civilian involvement in activities, many stakeholders have the impression that the U.S. military is not permitted to engage civilians in State Partnership Program activities and some states may have chosen not to conduct any events with civilians due to the perception that it may violate DOD guidance.²¹

While the GAO report seemed to recognize the value of civilian interaction, the National Guard Bureau opted to reduce that interaction (as seen in DODI 5111.20 above).²²

Although the reason for this is unclear, it is likely easier to regulate and provide quantitative assessments if the interaction is contained within the military. In relation to European partnerships, this decision has little effect since most of the desired

interaction already meets the new restrictions. However, some needs in the African nations are not being met. The needs in Africa and, in some cases Asia, are in governance and civil-military responsibility, along with basic assistance in infrastructure improvement.²³ While these activities do not necessarily meet the original goals of the SPP²⁴, they do meet the original intent. The SPP is meant to build relationships with countries in an effort to make them better partners in times of conflict. The instability found in Africa makes this unattainable unless we are willing to allow the flow of ideas, the creation of long-term relationships (whether they be civilian or military) and the improvement of infrastructure to accompany the training and advancement of a responsible military and security establishment.

Measuring the Effectiveness of the SPP

As the GAO report pointed out, the Partnership Program has struggled with measuring its successes in much the same way as other readiness programs.²⁵ With the relatively low price tag of under \$13M per fiscal year and a general consensus of its usefulness, there has been little emphasis on providing a comprehensive assessment.²⁶ However, an assessment would likely show the overarching benefits of the program and provide justification for its expansion.

As with so many programs in the military, the inputs of time and money are the most oft-used metrics to determine whether the SPP is meeting its intended purpose. The annual report of the program contains data on number of engagements and the total cost to the Department of Defense. The most recent annual report shows that in 2015, there were 779 engagements for a total cost of \$12.4 M.²⁷ It also discusses some of the engagements and includes anecdotal evidence of effectiveness. For example, it states, "The Michigan National Guard SPP relationship with Liberia provided vital insight

into the operating environment for the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) as it deployed to Liberia in support of the Ebola response.”²⁸ However complimentary to the program these anecdotes are, they do not serve as a real measure of effectiveness. Likewise, the time and money inputs merely serve as measures of performance and do not accurately assess whether the program is meeting national security goals.

Understanding the goals (outputs) the program strives to achieve is the first step to determining its effectiveness. What is it that we want the program to do? The goal should not be to count the number of engagements with other nations. Although the SPP states the overarching goal of building relationships through military-to-military engagements, individual partnership goals are subservient to the regional security goals of the Combatant Commands. There is good logic in this way of thinking, but it prevents Department of Defense (and perhaps State) from understanding if and why the program is working and then replicating and expanding the efforts in new regions. A better set of output measurements can augment the successes of the program.

Nation building has become a derogatory term in foreign politics today, but its tenets may provide the output measurements needed to assess the effectiveness of the SPP. Nation building is expensive, time-consuming and does not always work. However, there are instances in history, particularly post-war Germany and Japan, where it worked so well that the act of nation building created some of our greatest allies. In essence, the intended outcome of the Partnership Program is to create the environment where effective nation building can occur, and this is measured through three general factors. Pei and Kasper writing for the Carnegie Endowment named state capacity, alignment of interests, and commitment to economic development as three of

the factors that lead to successful nation building.²⁹ The Partnership Program engages in relationships and activities that will lead to success in these factors.

State capacity is among the first factors discussed in the article. The authors define this capacity as the “organizational effectiveness and discipline of its military, bureaucracy, and judiciary.”³⁰ The SPP, as currently tasked, focuses solely on the effectiveness of partner nations’ militaries. With expansion through the state governors’ office and in conjunction with state educational organizations, benefits of the partnership could be expanded to increase capacity through both governance and judiciary, as well as law enforcement and education. Measurements that address sustainable development, like those provided by the UN, would show an increase in state capacity and could be correlated to the relationships created through the SPP.

Secondly, there must be an “alignment of geopolitical interests.”³¹ Pei and Kasper are careful to stress that the alignment must be with both the elite of the country as well as with the public will.³² Currently, the Partnership Program has more interaction with the governments of partner nations leading to a greater alignment with the elite. However, a loosening of the regulations that allow SPP interactions with the general public could result in greater alignment across the whole of society. Additionally, in many countries where partnerships exist, military enlisted personnel are often underpaid, underequipped, and not provided opportunities for professional development and advancement.³³ Concurrently, military officers are often considered members of the upper classes. The SPP has access to and interaction with both. In conjunction with more civilian interaction, the relationship might result in general public approval for initiatives that are aligned with the international world order. Additionally, advancement

of a professional military force through increased Non-Commissioned Officer education and development, along with metrics of fair pay and promotion, would show measures of effectiveness for the partnership.

The last factor cited for successful nation building is that of the degree of commitment to the sustainable improvement of state capacity.³⁴ The commitment needs to transcend the current leadership and become part of the will of the partner nation, combining both the state capacity and alignment factors. The SPP, through its long term relationship with individuals and governments, can help to keep the commitment strong. Conversely, the partner nation's continuance of the Partnership Program, in itself, is an indication of a commitment to becoming a valued member of the international world order.

How do we go about measuring improvement (or decline) in state capacity, alignment of interests, and degree of commitment to the liberal world order in relation to the activities of the SPP? This is where it gets a bit tricky because military minds, and in some cases, Congress, prefer to see direct correlations between inputs and outputs. The benefits of the SPP cannot be measured in that manner. The value of the program that combatant commanders have intuitively derived are measured in the development of a professional military force, human rights improvements, economic development and participation in the international world order. Furthermore, those measurements need to be assessed over time.

Consider the story of Lieutenant General Dubie. His personal influence with Lieutenant General Miroslav Stojanovski, Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia from 2005-2011, took nearly twenty years to mature. The two

first met as Majors attending Vermont's Army Mountain Warfare School.³⁵ The benefits of the relationship were fully realized when they both found themselves in positions of significant authority. The influence and trust Lieutenant General Dubie shared with Lieutenant General Stojanovski resulted in a tri-lateral agreement between Vermont, Macedonia, and Senegal where Macedonia will act as a European partner to Senegal.³⁶ This is one of the most telling qualitative outputs that the program is working. Lieutenant General Dubie (then the TAG of Vermont) stated, "[The Macedonians] are very proud that they are actually attempting to share some of their knowledge and expertise. That's been clear from everyone on the Macedonia side. They feel very validated that they can go somewhere else in the world and maybe assist a third country."³⁷ This agreement shows both Macedonian alignment with US goals in Africa and commitment to the greater international world order.

Although the Department of Defense may find it necessary to develop some unique qualitative data output measures of their own, there are several organizations who already make the assessments that will be needed. One example is the Brookings Institute State Weakness Index that scores countries across economic, political, stability, and social welfare indicators.³⁸ Another example is the Democracy Index devised by The Economist Intelligence Unit that also assesses countries across 60 different indicators.³⁹ The overall rankings given to these countries is not necessarily that valuable for measuring the effectiveness of the SPP, but some of the individually scored indicators may be.

Increasing Readiness and Interoperability through the SPP

The State Partnership Program is ideally suited to meet the national security and interoperability goals of the US military. However, the current restrictions on civilian

participation must loosen and the program must have more funds and greater leeway to allow the program to become a *Whole-of-State* effort. The program's stated goal is to leverage "whole-of-society relationships" and "facilitate broader interagency and whole-of-government activities."⁴⁰ Yet, the restrictions on civilian participation make that an empty promise. Educators, civilian crisis management planners and governance experts within the state systems, along with private companies and non-profit organizations, should be involved in the building and maintaining of the state partnership. By sharing their ideas and expertise, both citizens and citizen-soldiers become part of a national security solution. There are four recommended changes that will help the SPP to reach its full potential. First, the SPP program should actively engage with citizens in partner nations. Likewise, private US citizens from within the partnered US states should be part of the program with the state governor's office playing a more active role in the engagement. Secondly, the partnership program should be expanded to more partner nations along with the necessary funding. A third recommendation is that the goals of the program be rewritten to include infrastructure improvement, and lastly, an attempt should be made to measure the program's full effectiveness in all aspects of national power.

Ideas

The citizen-soldier idea is one worth sharing. However, the current SPP program doesn't allow for that idea to spread through the right portions of the partner populations. First and foremost, there needs to be more interaction between national guard soldiers and the general populations of the partner nations. By only engaging with soldiers and government officials, we lose the chance to share one of our best American ideas. Additionally, soldiers who are also civilians have a variety of

experiences and worldviews to share. Add this to the inclusion of state citizens in specifically needed professions, planned and overseen by the Governor's office, and the program is far more likely to produce results with positive national security impacts that meet both the Combatant Commanders regional needs and the Administration's strategic demands.

However, the sharing of ideas is not quite enough. A successful idea is dependent upon successful discourse. Schmidt claims successful discourse encompasses, "relevance to the issues at hand, adequacy, applicability, appropriateness and resonance."⁴¹ A partnership program run at the State level with both military and civilian participants has the greatest likelihood of producing actionable ideas and programs that meet the requirements of successful discourse. The GAO report suggests that an increase in the breadth of activity should result in Department of State oversight.⁴² This would only end up hampering the program due to a simple matter of scale. It would fail to be relevant to and have resonance with the partner nation. A single entity trying to oversee so many partnerships would result in templated activity in order to produce countable metrics for assessment. The discourse under such a design would end up being superficial and without longevity. Much like mil-to-mil activity is the purview of the state national guard with the combatant commander's approval, any civ-to-civ or mil-to-civ activity should be organized by the state Governor's office with the approval of the country's ambassador team.

Relationships

Meaningful discourse on ideas is most easily accomplished through the building of strong personal and professional relationships. The SPP has proven its ability to create these relationships in a mil-to-mil context and has the potential to meet the same

need regarding governance and civil responsibility. To encourage this, the SPP program (both military and civilian participants) should play a key role in the civil-military relationship with their partner nations. In theory, the foreign service officers (FSO) in the partner nation would fill this need; however, FSO tours last from only one to three years severely degrading the longevity of the relationship. In an expanded SPP program that incorporates state employees, educators, and non-profits, the civ-to-civ relationship would be much stronger. As the National Guard must have approval for activity from the regional combatant commander, civilian participants would need approval from the embassy. Furthermore, the planning for all events would be accomplished by the guard, and all activity would be in conjunction with guard soldiers (fully answerable to the US Code of Military Justice) allowing for some federal governmental oversight in all activities.

Better interoperability within the mil-to-mil relationship based on training and professional development has already been mentioned, but there is an additional benefit to encouraging expansion of the relationships to include mil-to-civ. The US system of civilian control of the military is likely the best prevention against internal political strife involving the military. While individual National Guard units may not be able to prevent this from happening in partner nations, providing a behavioral model for military subservience to political will is important. By modeling the cooperative relationship the state guards share with their civilian leaders, we can help other nations build those internal relationships needed for political and economic advancement.

The overall outcomes will also improve if the program is expanded to include more partnerships, thus leading to the second recommendation. There are currently

seventy-three partnerships with only seventeen states carrying two or three partnerships.⁴³ Thirty states have only one partnership for which most have the capacity to expand their SPP activity. Additionally, funding must accompany this decision. While the program is generally considered a bargain for the Department of Defense and the National Security establishment, expansion cannot be accomplished without some additional funding. However, there may be a way to leverage funds from other government activities such as USAID to help build the relationships. Including the SPP in activities happening within the partner nations regardless of where the funding is coming from will encourage both the relationship and the improvement of infrastructure within the partner nations.

Preparedness

The third recommendation for realizing the full potential of the SPP is to use the mil-to-mil training and expanded relationships to improve the logistical infrastructure of the partner nations. There are several reasons why this is important to the national security strategy. From a strategic sense, any infrastructure improvement is, in theory, helping the partner nation economy. Sustainable economic improvement brings nations further into the international world order.

Additionally, with input and assistance from the US National Guard units, the infrastructure created will be better suited to US needs should there be conflict in that region. Harkening back to Senegal as an example, infrastructure improvement could greatly enhance the abilities to conduct activity in the region. The Port of Dakar is one of the largest deep-water ports on the west coast of Africa.⁴⁴ That, along with its key location amongst countries with recent insurgent activity such as Mali, Niger, and Mauritania⁴⁵, makes Senegal an ideal staging area should the US find itself embroiled in

a conflict on the African continent. However, the poor road and rail conditions, along with outdated electricity infrastructure⁴⁶, will cause the US considerable issues should they need to debark a large US theater sustainment package in the area. Given leeway to engage in infrastructure improvement, the Vermont National Guard, through their SPP relationship with Senegal, could positively impact those improvements to the best advantage of both Senegal and US national security building through logistical preparedness.

Related, but creating different readiness outcomes, is the advantage the US Department of Defense receives in engaging in these activities. Training is generally thought to decrease unit readiness. However, training that increases preparedness in a certain region increases the readiness of a National Guard unit (and subsequently, the DOD as a whole) to perform during a conflict in this specific area. They not only have the personal and professional relationships and cultural proficiency, they will have intimate knowledge of the logistical network to include physical infrastructure and local regulations, as well as a head start on contracting relationships. This knowledge and experience can then be shared with the active component and foreign service officers in times of emergency, as was seen during the recent Ebola crisis.

Measuring Success

The final recommendation is to ensure the Department of Defense is providing useful measures of effectiveness to assess the program. The number of engagements, while a useful data point, does not show effectiveness. Advancements in governance, education, and foreign investment is a better indicator of the positive nature of the SPP relationship than the number of plane tickets the program bought.

For example, US business investment may be higher if investors considered the area safer due to the partnership. The increased civilian participation may also cause more nations to seek partnership through the program to meet their development goals which would be another indicator of success for the SPP program overall. The National Guard Bureau should put together an index of indicators in order to both assess and improve the State Partnership Program. The current system of anecdotal evidence does not allow for program improvement nor justifies its continuance and possible expansion.

Conclusion

The US military has attempted to keep a considered distance from involvement in foreign political matters since National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice stated shortly after the 9/11 attacks, “There is nothing wrong with nation-building, but not when it is done by the American military.”⁴⁷ This attitude has permeated recent national military strategy; however, the full power of the US government includes its military and the resources it can provide. One of those resources is the National Guard SPP. Through sustained relationships with partner nations, the SPP is able to share ideas and engage in activity that improve the partner nation’s state capacity, as well as alignment and commitment to the international world order. However, current restrictions on activity between military and civilian personnel along with ineffective assessment measures prevent the program from reaching its full potential.

Setting the conditions for successful nation building may not fit well with the goals and structure of the active force. However, there is a much more natural cohesion between the development of a partner nation, both militarily and civilly, and the expertise of the National Guard. By adding the benefits of a greater involvement with state governments and educational institutions in a long-standing relationship, the US

could realize better partnerships with nations in key areas around the globe. Nation building that strengthens the international world order need not be surrounded by negativity, especially when a nation chooses it for themselves by requesting a partnership through the SPP.

The National Guard Association of the United States lists expansion of the State Partnership Program as one of its top priorities stating, “[T]he unique dual nature of the National Guard places SPP at the crossroads of diplomacy and defense, and embodies the widely accepted ‘smart power’ approach to United States foreign policy.”⁴⁸ The relationships that have been built through the program over the last two decades have largely remained steady regardless of changes in US political administrations and global conflicts. Expansion and proper measurement is the logical next step to increasing the effectiveness of the National Guard State Partnership Program.

Endnotes

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