

November 2, 2020

Defense Primer: Security Cooperation

Security Cooperation (SC) Overview

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses the term *security cooperation* (SC) to refer broadly to DOD interactions with foreign security establishments. SC activities include

- transferring defense articles and services,
- military-to-military exercises,
- ministerial advising, and
- train and equip programs.

SC programs are intended to encourage and enable partner nations (PNs) to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives. They are considered a key tool for achieving U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives. These activities are executed through both DOD-managed and -administered SC programs and DOD-administered State Department (DOS) security assistance (SA) programs. Those DOS SA programs that DOD administers are considered an element of SC that is funded and authorized by DOS. Both types of programs receive congressional appropriations and are legally authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act. Beyond SC grant programs, SC encompasses the Foreign Military Sales program and enables U.S. and PN collaboration on defense articles.

SC: Policy and Objectives

DOD SC activities aim to achieve particular objectives in support of U.S. national security and defense strategies. Specifically, SC may build defense relationships that promote U.S. security interests, enhance military capabilities of U.S. allies and partners, and provide the United States with access to PNs. Under the overarching goal of furthering U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, SC emphasizes partnerships, aiming to be mutually beneficial for the U.S. and its partners. SC activities aim to develop and strengthen a PN's ability to provide internal security, contribute to regional security efforts, combat shared threats, and increase military interoperability with the U.S.

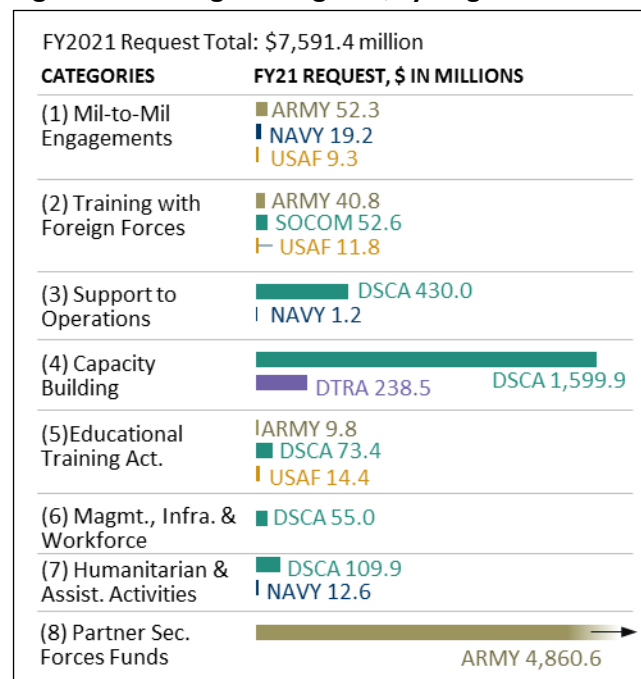
The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) signaled the Trump Administration's intention to shift SC activities from nearly two decades of prioritizing counterterrorism toward "great power competition" (GPC) with Russia and China. The shift raised questions and debate as to how SC should be realigned to meet this objective and what the implications could be for scaling down counterterrorism-focused SC activities in Africa and the Middle East, especially as Russia and China move to increase their influence in those regions. Some have suggested that rather than a shift, counterterrorism, as well as irregular warfare, should remain priorities within GPC.

SC: Roles and Responsibilities

Many SC activities require DOD to coordinate with multiple DOD components and other U.S. agencies, primarily DOS. Some DOD SC activities require varying levels of coordination with DOS. Within DOD, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USD[P]) exercises overall direction, authority, and control over SC matters.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) represents the interests of the Secretary of Defense and USD(P) in SC matters and is tasked with directing, administering, and executing DSCA-managed SC programs, developing SC policies, and providing DOD-wide SC guidance. DSCA is also DOD's main interlocutor between the PNs, the military departments, implementing agencies, and the defense industry. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD-SO/LIC) oversees and approves some SC training activities that are managed by DSCA. U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) coordinates those SC activities executed by special operations forces (SOF). DOS leads U.S. foreign aid and retains statutory responsibility for SA. DOS's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM) is the principal link to DOD and works to ensure that SA is integrated with other U.S. policies and activities at the country, regional, and global levels. PM also determines PN eligibility, appropriate SA programs, and which defense articles and equipment are permitted for transfer.

Figure 1. SC Budget Categories, by Organization



Source: CRS. Data from DSCA SC Budget Display, FY2021.

Table 1. Select Security Cooperation Accounts, FY2019-FY2021 (\$ millions)

Account	FY19 Actual	FY20 Enacted /Est.	FY21 Req.	Senate NDAA S. 4049	House NDAA H.R. 6395	House Approp. H.R. 7617
DSCA SC - Base	601.5	639.6	598.6	598.6	598.6	659.2
DSCA SC - OCO	1,392.0	1,439.2	1,557.8	1,880.3	1,337.8	1,651.3
Cooperative Threat Reduction	350.2	373.7	238.5	288.5	373.7	360.2
Overseas Hum., Disaster, & Civic Aid	117.7	135.0	109.9	109.9	109.9	147.5
Afghan. Security Forces Fund	3,920.0	4,200.0	4,015.6	4,015.6	3515.6	3,050.0
Counter-IS in Iraq & Syria (CTEF)	1,352.2	1,195.0	845.0	522.5	700.0	700.0

Source: CRS analysis of DOD Budget Documents; S. 4049 as passed in Senate; H.R. 6395 as passed in House; H.R. 7617 as passed in House.

SC Reforms from the FY2017 NDAA

The post-9/11 period saw the rapid and piecemeal expansion of DOD SC activities, mainly as temporary authorities that required annual renewal in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The FY2017 NDAA initiated significant reforms that consolidated and codified existing SC programs into 10 U.S.C. §301-386. Many of the reforms aimed to make improvements to the SC programs and activities themselves, as well as improvements in the management and oversight of those programs. Key reforms from the FY2017 NDAA included requirements for the following:

- A consolidated budget for all SC programs and activities (10 U.S.C. §381); the first was released for FY2019.
- Undertaking Institutional Capacity Building programs to accompany and complement programs to build the capacity of foreign security forces (10 U.S.C. §333).
- A DOD SC Workforce Development Program to manage a professional workforce in support of SC programs and activities (10 U.S.C. §384).
- A program of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E) to be informed and supported by strategic evaluations on initial PN assessments, monitoring of implementation, and the efficiency and effectiveness of SC programs and activities (10 U.S.C. §383).
- Increasing ASD-SO/LIC's role in management of SOF and SOCOM (§922, FY2017 NDAA; P.L. 114-328).

Congressional Role

Congress provides the authority and funding for DOD's SC programs. The armed services committees authorize funding for DOD SC programs, while State SA programs receive authorization from the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs Committees. The appropriations committees fund security cooperation/assistance in annual appropriations bills.

Through these six committees, Congress plays critical roles in the design and oversight of SC programs and in ensuring that SC activities are aligned with and meeting U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives through development, consideration, and action on SC-proposed legislation. Relevant committees are notified on a regular basis about some, but not all, SC activities. Congress can exercise oversight roles in numerous ways, including determining how the executive branch makes decisions for the export of military and dual-use items, using annual authorizing legislation to modify the *U.S. Code*, reviewing proposed arms transfers and planned SC/SA activities and funding obligations, mandating reports, and holding relevant hearings. Congress also influences SC through the ratification of treaties with SC and SA implications.

FY2021 SC Budget Request, Authorizations, and Appropriations

DSCA's FY2021 SC budget justification included a new account, the National Defense Strategy Implementation (NDS-I) account, which would consolidate multiple capacity building authorities. The House version of the FY2021 Defense Appropriations bill does not include this consolidation and recommends funding for the SC programs separately. The FY2021 Senate NDAA states that the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative, which was consolidated into the NDS-I, should remain a standalone SC initiative.

The House version of the FY2021 Defense Appropriations bill would increase DSCA's base and Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget and recommends significant increases for SC in both Africa Command's and Southern Command's areas of responsibility (funding for both has declined since FY2017). The House and Senate versions of the FY2021 NDAA would decrease the amount authorized for Iraq through the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund (CTEF). The Senate version would transfer \$322.5 million from CTEF for Iraq to DSCA's OCO funds and specifies that the transferred funds be used for traditional programs building partner capacity.

Potential Questions for Congress

- What is the implementation status of key FY2017 NDAA-mandated SC reforms? In what ways have the reforms been successful? What reforms remain outstanding? What improvements can be made to address those SC reforms that have not been fully implemented?
- Are the required congressional notifications and reports sufficient for Congress to exercise oversight of SC activities, and are they being fully implemented? How can Congress determine the implications of the money it appropriates on SC programs? How does DOD evaluate the effectiveness of SC programs?
- How are SC programs contributing to or furthering U.S. foreign policy goals and strategic objectives? How do SC activities align with GPC? What impact is the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic having on U.S. security partnerships and SC programs?
- How effective have efforts been to create security assistance units within regular forces, such as the Security Force Assistance Brigades? Has their deployment reduced the strain on SOF as intended?

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