The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership

Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Lesley Anne Warner

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The Strategic Studies Division is led by Dr. Eric V. Thompson, who is available at 703-824-2243 or thompsoe@cna.org. The executive assistant to the director is Ms. Rebecca Edelston, at 703-824-2604 or edelstonr@cna.org.

The work described in this study was conducted by a Strategic Studies analyst on assignment to the Center for Complex Operations at National Defense University.

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Jonathan J. Schroden, Ph.D., Director
Center for Stability and Development
CNA Corporation

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Executive Summary

The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is a multiyear, interagency program to counter violent extremism (CVE) by building the resilience of marginalized communities so that they can resist radicalization and terrorist recruitment, and to counter terrorism (CT) by building long-term security force counterterrorism capacity and regional security cooperation. By U.S. government standards, TSCTP is an exceptional program for its ability to marshal interagency resources in support of a regional security approach that spans the "3Ds" – Diplomacy, Defense, and Development. The program covers ten countries in the Sahel and Maghreb: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia.

This analysis was conducted during the 2013 interagency review of the U.S. government's approach to stability in the Maghreb and Sahel, and a related TSCTP program review. A CNA analyst on assignment at the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) at National Defense University conducted not-for-attribution interviews of personnel from the headquarters level (U.S. government agencies) to the mission level (U.S. Embassy country teams) who are responsible for planning and implementing TSCTP activities, in order to understand the program's strategy, coordination, successes, and failures. Six functional categories of TSCTP engagement were derived from these interviews, in order to conceptualize the program's activities outside of traditional agency-specific stovepipes. They are:

- **Military Capacity-Building:** Training and equipping partner nations' CT forces to monitor and control borders, and identify and react to the presence of terrorist groups in their countries.

- **Law Enforcement Anti-Terrorism Capacity-Building:** Enhancing the investigative abilities of partner nations' law enforcement agencies and strengthening law enforcement

personnel's ability to protect critical infrastructure and secure borders against illicit trafficking.

- **Justice Sector Counterterrorism Capacity-Building:** Increasing partner nations' judicial capacity to prosecute and imprison terrorists, improving prison management to counter prison radicalization, and countering transnational organized crime.

- **Public Diplomacy and Information Operations:** Working with partner nations to promote moderation and tolerance, counter violent extremist ideology, and encourage populations to report security threats to partner nation security forces.

- **Community Engagement:** Engaging key leaders and civil society organizations in partner nations to mitigate conflict and counter violent extremism, and delivering services to marginalized populations that may be vulnerable to terrorist recruitment.

- **Vocational Training:** Offering vocational training to the at-risk populations of partner nations, and increasing opportunities for social and economic inclusion in order to mitigate the recruitment of marginalized populations into terrorist organizations.

Since its inception in 2005 as an outgrowth of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), TSCTP has had some notable successes from the standpoint of U.S. government stakeholders – although these successes may be the result of correlation rather than causation. For example, while many African countries contributed troops to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), Chad's U.S.-trained Special Anti-Terrorism Group (SATG) was the only African force that took part in offensive operations to clear terrorist-occupied northern Mali in early 2013. Additionally, the case of Burkina Faso demonstrates the ability of the country team to link non-TSCTP and TSCTP engagement. The U.S. Embassy country team in Burkina Faso used Burkinabé alumni of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs exchange programs to compensate for the withdrawal of Peace Corps volunteers from the Sahel region of that country, and

subsequently as locally hired USAID staff for the implementation of Peace through Development II (PDEVII).

Like many U.S. government foreign assistance programs, however, TSCTP is not without planning and implementation challenges. Some – bureaucratic impasses, regional animosities, disruptions in engagement, and a lack of a shared threat perception with partner nations – can be attributed to the cost of doing business in the region and cannot be resolved in the near term. Others, such as insufficient "end-use monitoring" on security force training, a lack of a real-time Common Operating Picture of TSCTP engagement, and the program's resource constraints that force civilian agencies to rely on DoD human and financial "surge" capacity, can be remedied in order to improve the execution of the program. Accordingly, recommendations for the program are as follows:

1. Develop a web-based real-time Common Operating Picture managed by the Standing Interagency Working Group (SIWG), with mandatory inputs from TSCTP stakeholders.

2. Designate in-country program points of contact whose duty is to facilitate field-based regional coordination across TSCTP agencies, stakeholders, and country teams.

3. Increase the use of regional–vice bilateral–training across TSCTP partner nations as a long-term confidence-building measure to help counteract intra-regional mistrust.

4. Establish clear guidelines for "end-use monitoring" of U.S. government assistance and identify conditions under which assistance should be adjusted or terminated.

5. Develop more extensive partner nation capacity-building components within the public diplomacy, community engagement, and vocational training categories of TSCTP engagement so that civilian capacity-building can keep pace with the program's security force capacity-building.

6. Identify opportunities within TSCTP so that U.S. government stakeholders can flexibly accentuate positive, or mitigate negative, developments in the region that are relevant to TSCTP objectives. This should include

remedying the lack of "surge" capacity within civilian U.S. government agencies.

7. Identify opportunities for TSCTP engagement to leverage broader U.S. government assistance that is relevant to TSCTP objectives, as well as the CT/CVE and non-CT/CVE capacity-building efforts of TSCTP partner nations and other bilateral & multilateral partners.

This study provides an overview of TSCTP activities, an analysis of the program's planning and implementation challenges from the strategic to the tactical level, and recommendations that can shape and inform the program to better respond to the region's ongoing security challenges. As it currently stands, TSCTP provides both military and non-military approaches to the region's challenges, and is a means by which to maintain the United States' indirect, or "by, with, and through," approach to countering terrorism and countering violent extremism in the region. Therefore, despite its planning and implementation challenges, TSCTP provides a base that can be learned from and improved upon in future iterations of the program.

Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

ACM	Assistance of Civil Military Team
AF	State Department Bureau of African Affairs
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATA	Anti-Terrorism Assistance
CAERT	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (French acronym)
CCIF	Combatant Commander Initiative Fund
CCO	Center for Complex Operations
CEMOC	Joint Operational General Staff Committee (French acronym)
CMMRC	Conflict Mitigation and Management Regional Council
CMSE	Civil-Military Support Element
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSCC	Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications
CSO	State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations
CT	Counterterrorism
CT	State Department Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism
CTF	Counterterrorism Finance
CTFP	Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism
DA	Development Assistance
DARE	Drug Abuse Resistance and Education
DATT	Defense Attaché
DCCEP	Developing Country Combined Exercise Program
DoD	Department of Defense

DoJ	Department of Justice
ESF	Economic Support Fund
ETIA	Echelon Tactique Inter-Armée
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
EUTM	European Union Training Mission in Mali
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program
INAP	National Vocational Training Institute (French acronym)
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
INL	State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
IRD	International Relief & Development
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JCOA	Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis
JIATF	Joint Interagency Task Force
JPAT	Joint Planning and Assistance Team
JSOTF-TS	Joint Special Operations Task Force – Trans Sahara
LEGAT	Legal Attaché
LSGA	Limited Scope Grant Agreement
MAED	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development (French acronym)
MEDCAP	Medical Civic Action Program
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative

MIBOCA	Military Intelligence Basics Course for Africa
MINOCA	Military Intelligence Basics Non-Commissioned Officer Course for Africa
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (French acronym)
MIST	Military Information Support Team
MLAT	Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (French acronym)
NADR	Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NEA	State Department Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
NDLEA	Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
NDU	National Defense University
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEF-TS	Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara
OJS	Operation Juniper Shield
OOV	Operation Objective Voice
OPDAT	Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training
OSC	Office of Security Cooperation
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PAO/PAS	Public Affairs Officer / Public Affairs Section
PD	Public Diplomacy
PDEVII	Peace through Development II
PISCES	Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PM	State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
PME	Professional Military Education
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
RLA	Resident Legal Advisor

RSI	Regional Strategic Initiative
RSO	Regional Security Officer
SATG	Special Anti-Terrorism Group
SBS	Special Boat Service
SFOAA	Department of State Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act
SIWG	Standing Interagency Working Group
SOCAFRICA	U.S. Special Operations Command – Africa
SOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFLE	Special Operations Forces Liaison Element
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
TDY	Temporary Duty
TOLERANCE	Training of Leaders for Religious and National Co-Existence
TSC	Theater Security Cooperation
TSCTI	Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative
TSCTP	Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership
ULP	University Linkage Program
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
VETCAP	Veterinary Civic Action Program
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
VTC	Video Teleconference

Background

The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is a multiyear, interagency program aimed at countering terrorism (CT) and countering violent extremism (CVE) in the Sahel and Maghreb.[1] By U.S. government standards, TSCTP is an exceptional program for its ability to marshal interagency resources in support of a multifaceted approach to regional security that spans the "3Ds" – Diplomacy, Defense, and Development. However, like many other foreign assistance programs, TSCTP is not without planning and implementation challenges, which will be detailed in this study.

As of the writing of this report, there exists no analysis of TSCTP that captures the program's current activities across agencies and countries, and catalogues the program's implementation challenges from the strategic to the tactical level. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a gap in the analytic literature on U.S. government efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism across North and West Africa, and will both complement and expand upon two previous studies. The first is the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report *Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, which is a strategic-level analysis of the program's implementation challenges as of mid 2008.[2] The second is the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) case study *Mali: Building Partner Capacity and Countering AQIM,* which covers Department of

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[1] For the purpose of this paper, countries in the Maghreb are Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, while the Sahel covers parts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

[2] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.* Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, GAO-08-860, July 2008, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014). (Hereafter, GAO, *Actions Needed.*)

Defense (DoD) efforts to counter al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali prior to the March 2012 coup.[3]

This study was conducted by a CNA analyst on assignment at the Center for Complex Operations (CCO), during a concurrent interagency review of the U.S. government's approach to stability in the Maghreb and Sahel, and a related TSCTP program review.[4] These efforts came on the heels of the 2011 Arab Awakening across North Africa, and the Tuareg uprising in Mali, the subsequent coup, and the jihadist occupation of northern Mali the following year. Conducted between January and December 2013, this study provides an overview of TSCTP activities, an analysis of the program's planning and implementation challenges from the headquarters level (U.S. government agencies) to the mission level (U.S. Embassy country teams), and recommendations that can shape and inform the program to better respond to the region's ongoing security challenges. To that end, this study was conducted in the following sequence.

Analytic Approach

The CNA analyst on assignment at CCO conducted not-for-attribution interviews of personnel at U.S. government agencies that participated in TSCTP, in order to get a better sense of the program's strategy, coordination, successes, and failures. Interview questions focused on what types of programs/operations were executed to achieve TSCTP objectives, what types of bureaucratic or implementation challenges affected the program, and whether TSCTP was able to adapt to the changing security environment in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening and the crises in Mali. Since the State Department,

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[3] Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, *Mali: Building Partner Capacity and Countering AQIM,* Unclassified / For Official Use Only, February 22, 2013. (Hereafter, JCOA, *Mali.*)

[4] *Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Review,* Unclassified / For Official Use Only, June 2013 (hereafter, *TSCTP Review)*; *Draft Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Guiding Strategy,* Unclassified / For Official Use Only, October 2013 (hereafter, *Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy).*

the Department of Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) executed the bulk of TSCTP activities, headquarters-level interviews concentrated on offices within these agencies.

The author also spoke with former U.S. government personnel from across the interagency who had previously worked on TSCTP, with GAO analysts who had been involved with tracking the status of recommendations for executive action from their 2008 report on TSCTP, with JCOA analysts updating their February 2013 Mali case study, and with Congressional Research Service (CRS) analysts who have been responsible for analyzing policy and implementation issues related to the program.

Between April and September 2013, the author traveled to Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal to gain greater insight as to how TSCTP activities are coordinated and implemented at the mission level.[5] While in these countries, the author spoke with members of the U.S. Embassy country teams whose duties included overseeing or administering elements of TSCTP programs. These included the Ambassador or DCM, Defense Attaché (DATT), Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), Regional Security Officer (RSO), Political Officer, Public Affairs Officer (PAO), Resident Legal Advisor (RLA), Legal Attaché (LEGAT), and representatives from USAID and the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Where present, the author also met with the Special Operations Forces Liaison Element (SOFLE), Military Information Support Team (MIST), and Civil Military Support Element (CMSE) personnel. In some countries, with permission of the country team, the author met with partner nation counterparts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were the implementing partners for the U.S. government's TSCTP programs. In all, over 70 interviews of U.S. government TSCTP stakeholders were conducted for this study.

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[5] Due to restrictions on U.S. government in-country presence in the aftermath of the September 2012 attack on the embassy in Tunis, the author was not able to travel to Tunisia.

Based on the *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plans* of each U.S. Embassy in the region and inputs from the interviews conducted, the author derived six functional categories of TSCTP engagement in order to understand the program's activities outside of traditional agency-specific stovepipes, and identify areas in which interagency activities overlap. These functional categories are:

- Military Capacity-Building

- Law Enforcement Anti-Terrorism Capacity-Building

- Justice Sector Counterterrorism Capacity-Building

- Public Diplomacy and Information Operations

- Community Engagement

- Vocational Training.

In some cases, whether certain U.S. government activities were under the umbrella of TSCTP depended on the perspective of the interviewees. For example, a handful of U.S. government programs, such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), also work towards the TSCTP objectives of countering terrorism and violent extremism, but are not necessarily considered part of the program itself.

Finally, based primarily on inputs from interviews with TSCTP stakeholders at the headquarters and mission levels, and supplemented by previous analyses of U.S. CT/CVE efforts in the Maghreb and Sahel, the author identified planning and implementation challenges and recommended ways for the program to address these issues.

Overview of the Report [6]

This report is organized into five sections. The first offers background information on how the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) gave way to the expanded regional and functional focus that now

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[6] A version of this report will also be published by the Center for Complex Operations as PRISM Occasional Paper No. 1.

characterizes TSCTP. The second section covers the anatomy of TSCTP as a program – which U.S. government stakeholders are involved in program planning and execution, how they coordinate among themselves, and how the program is funded. The third section delves into the aforementioned functional areas of TSCTP, including which USG stakeholders are involved in each area, who their partner nation counterparts are, and what types of activities occur within these functional areas. The fourth section covers TSCTP planning and implementation challenges and is based primarily on interviews from USG TSCTP stakeholders. The fifth and final section offers conclusions and recommendations based on the fieldwork and analysis conducted.

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Evolution of the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership

Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Maghreb and Sahel

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb[7] and other violent extremist organizations (VEOs) pose only a limited threat to U.S. global interests beyond the Sahel and Maghreb.[8] In fact, the region's mostly Muslim population generally rejects the violent extremist ideology espoused by VEOs.[9] Still, several terrorist groups – such as AQIM, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar al-Dine, Boko Haram, Ansaru, Ansar al-Sharia,

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[7] AQIM was an outgrowth of the Algerian-origin Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which was active during Algeria's civil war (1992-2002) as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GIA became the GSPC in 1998. Following successful Algerian counterterrorism operations, the GSPC established a safe haven in northern Mali and changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in 2007.

[8] Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Testimony before the House Subcommittees on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and Middle East and North Africa, "The Growing Crisis in Africa's Sahel Region," May 21, 2013, http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/209790.htm#_methods=onPlusOne%2C_ready%2C_close%2C_open%2C_resizeMe%2C_renderstart%2Concircled%2Cdrefresh%2Cerefresh&id=I0_1392144037512&parent=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.state.gov&pfname=&rpctoken=47533941 (accessed February 11, 2014).

[9] Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs Hearing on "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region," November 17, 2009, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/BenjaminTestimony091117a1.pdf(accessed February 10, 2014).

and the al-Mulathamun Battalion – operate in TSCTP countries.[10] Of these groups, AQIM poses the greatest threat to regional and U.S. interests.[11]

By and large, the Maghreb countries are more developed than their Sahelian neighbors, and have greater government capacity and stronger security apparatuses.[12] However, the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Awakening and the subsequent collapse of the Ben Ali, Mubarak, and Qadhafi regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, respectively, left a security vacuum across a region whose police states had provided a bulwark against the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. In the aftermath of this upheaval, there were fears that terrorist groups would capitalize on the resulting political instability and arms flows to increase their foothold and reach throughout the region.[13] Indeed, while Mali had been a safe

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[10] The Secretary of State has designated the following Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) in TSCTP countries: Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia), Ansaru and Boko Haram (Nigeria), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Ansar al-Dine (Mali and throughout the Sahel), and al-Mulathamun Battalion (Algeria). State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations,* http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm (accessed February 10, 2014).

[11] LeSage, *Evolving Threat.*

[12] The Sahel has some of the most undeveloped countries in the world, with all seven in the Low Human Development category, according to the 2013 United Nations Human Development Index. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World,* http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_c omplete.pdf (accessed February 10, 2014).

[13] Ambassador Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "The Crisis in Mali: U.S. Interests and the International Response," February 14, 2013, http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20130214/100248/HH RG-113-FA00-Wstate-CarsonJ-20130214.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014); Amanda Dory, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, "The LRA, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, AQIM and other Sources of Instability in Africa," April 25, 2012,

haven for AQIM for many years, after the fall of the Qadhafi regime, the Tuareg uprising, and the March 2012 coup, AQIM, MUJAO, and Ansar al-Dine occupied the northern part of the country and remained in control of that territory until the French intervention in January 2013.[14]

Some of the VEOs operating in the region, have global or hybrid global-local agendas and target Western interests, such as Boko Haram's August 2011 attack on the UN building in Abuja, Nigeria and al-Mulathamun Battalion's January 2013 attack on the In Amenas natural gas field compound in Algeria. Yet, while VEOs have launched attacks in a handful of TSCTP countries, these countries are more commonly used as safe havens than as a

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http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/112/HHRG-112-FA00-WState-DoryA-20120425.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014); Alexis Arieff, *Political Transition in Tunisia,* Congressional Research Service, June 18, 2012, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014).

[14] For in-depth analyses on the 2012-2013 crises in Mali, see Baz Lecocq et al., "One Hippopotamus and Eight Blind Analysts: a Multivocal Analysis of the 2012 Political Crisis in the Divided Republic of Mali*,*" *Review of African Political Economy* 40, issue 137 (2013), pp. 343-357; Alexander Thurston and Andrew Lebovich, *A Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis,* Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) Working Paper No. 13-001, Northwestern University, September 2, 2013, http://www.bcics.northwestern.edu/documents/workingpapers/ISITA-13-001-Thurston-Lebovich.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014); Susanna D. Wing, *Mali's Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict,* United States Institute of Peace Special Report 331, May 2013, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014); International Crisis Group, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation,* Africa Report N°189, 18 Jul 2012, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/west-africa/mali/189-mali-avoiding-escalation-english.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014); Alexis Arieff and Kelly Johnson*, The Crisis in Mali,* Congressional Research Service, August 16, 2012, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/198097.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

theater of operations.[15] With weak government institutions, inadequate public service delivery, porous borders, resource constraints for counterterrorism operations, and occasional lack of willingness to confront terrorist groups, the region has several vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorists and criminal organizations.[16]

Moreover, VEOs take advantage of the region's political and economic vulnerabilities to recruit manpower. Drivers of violent extremism in the region are not sole-source; they include youth frustration over insufficient educational or vocational opportunities, government repression[17] and human rights violations, and corruption[18] and government impunity.[19] In

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[15] International Crisis Group, *Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?*, Africa Report N°208, 19 September 2013, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/west-africa/niger/208-niger-another-weak-link-in-the-sahel-english.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014).

[16] Douglas Farah, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs on "Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa," June 23, 2009, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FarahTestimony090623a1.pdf (accessed February 10, 2014).

[17] According to *Freedom in the World 2013,* one TSCTP country is categorized as Free (Senegal), five are Partly Free (Burkina Faso, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia), and four are Not Free (Algeria, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania). Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2013,* http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW%202013%20Booklet.pdf (accessed February 10, 2014).

[18] According to the *2013 Corruption Perception Index,* which ranks 177 countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be, TSCTP countries ranked from most corrupt to least corrupt are as follows: Chad (163), Nigeria (144), Mali (127), Mauritania (119), Niger (106), Algeria (94), Morocco (91), Burkina Faso (83), Tunisia (77), and Senegal (77). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2013,* http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/ (accessed February 10, 2014).

[19] Ambassador Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs

addition, extremists returning from conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria are potential sources of instability, as they may be vectors of violent extremism in their countries of origin, or could provide operational and tactical linkages to international terrorist organizations.[20] VEOs in TSCTP countries are financed primarily through the kidnapping of Westerners for ransom and by their involvement in transnational organized crime, such as cigarette smuggling, narcotrafficking (cocaine en route from South America to Europe, or Moroccan cannabis resin to Libya, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula), arms smuggling, and trafficking in persons.[21] While there is no definitive evidence to support allegations on the extent of the interaction between terrorist

Hearing on "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region," November 17, 2009, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CarsonTestimony091117a1.pdf (accessed February 10, 2014); Earl Gast, Acting Assistant Administrator for Africa, U.S. Agency for International Development, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs Hearing on "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategy across Africa's Sahel Region," November 17, 2009, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/GastTestimony091117a1.pdf (accessed February 12, 2014); Nancy Lindborg, Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, Testimony before the House Subcommittees on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations and Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, and Middle East and North Africa, "The Growing Crisis in Africa's Sahel Region," May 21, 2013, http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/statement-nancy-lindborg-assistant-administrator-democracy (accessed February 11, 2014).

[20] Alexis Arieff, *Morocco: Current Issues,* Congressional Research Service, October 18, 2013, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21579.pdf (accessed February 11, 2014).

[21] International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel;* Wolfram Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2012, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf (accessed February 10. 2014); Yamamoto, "The Growing Crisis in Africa's Sahel Region."

groups and narcotrafficking syndicates in the region,[22] it is plausible that, at the very least, AQIM and other armed groups in the region have imposed transit fees or lent protection to convoys.[23] In some countries, political elites and military officers have also have been implicated in transnational organized crime,[24] but in other cases, the government may simply turn a blind eye to illicit trafficking in order to preserve stability in certain parts of the country.[25]

Origins of the Pan-Sahel Initiative

The Pan-Sahel Initiative was the precursor to TSCTP, and was a post-9/11 initiative that developed from a concern that the region's weak states could become a safe haven for terrorist groups linked with al-Qaeda to launch attacks against U.S. interests.[26] Between 2002 and 2004, PSI had an annual budget of $7.75M to train and equip six company-sized partner nation rapid-reaction CT forces of approximately 100-150 soldiers each. Three of these rapid-reaction forces were in Mali, while Chad, Mauritania, and Niger had one company each.[27] Each country's CT forces were trained in small unit infantry tactics (shooting, moving, communicating), with the goal of enhancing regional cooperation, protecting borders against illicit trafficking, tracking

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[22] International Crisis Group, *Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?*

[23] Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict*; Lindborg, "The Growing Crisis in Africa's Sahel Region"; LeSage, *Evolving Threat*.

[24] Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict;* Thurston and Lebovich, *Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis.*

[25] Ibid.

[26] The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States,* September 2002, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014); Jim Fisher-Thompson, "U.S.-African Partnership Helps Counter Terrorists in Sahel Region," March 23, 2004, http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2004/03/200403 23170343r1ejrehsif0.1366693.html#axzz2gESBtakr (accessed January 27, 2014); GAO, *Actions Needed.*

[27] International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel.*

the movement of transnational terrorists, and deterring terrorist groups from establishing safe havens in the Sahel.

Transition to the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership

In January 2004, U.S. Ambassadors to Algeria, Mali, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia met to discuss the growing need for a preemptive regional approach to address the region's vulnerability to terrorist activity. The outcome of this, and subsequent meetings at the National Security Council and between the Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) and the Africa (AF) Bureaus at the State Department, was the recommendation that PSI be expanded into a more comprehensive program that would transcend regional and bureaucratic boundaries, thereby facilitating regional and interagency cooperation. This expansion was also a recognition that a more holistic approach to the region that moved beyond training and equipping regional security forces would allow development assistance and public diplomacy to become part of an overall counterterrorism strategy.[28]

The new concept, then called the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), was approved at a January 2005 Deputies Committee. TSCTI subsequently became a Program of Record called the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership with a designated amount of funding, which allowed for the expansion of the program beyond security force assistance.[29] In addition to the original PSI countries of Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, TSCTP expanded geographically to include Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia. Burkina Faso was added in 2009, for a total of 10 TSCTP countries spanning the Sahel and

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[28] William P. Pope, Acting Coordinator, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, Testimony Before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, March 10, 2005, http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/43702.htm (accessed February 11, 2014).

[29] Interview with former OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

Maghreb. As of this writing, TSCTP stakeholders are voting to determine whether to extend an invitation to Libya and Cameroon to join TSCTP. Libya has been invited to join TSCTP multiple times since 2009, but, as of this writing, has not yet accepted. The map below indicates both the countries that are currently, and those that may soon be, part of TSCTP.

■ TSCTP Countries

▨ Potential Expansion of TSCTP
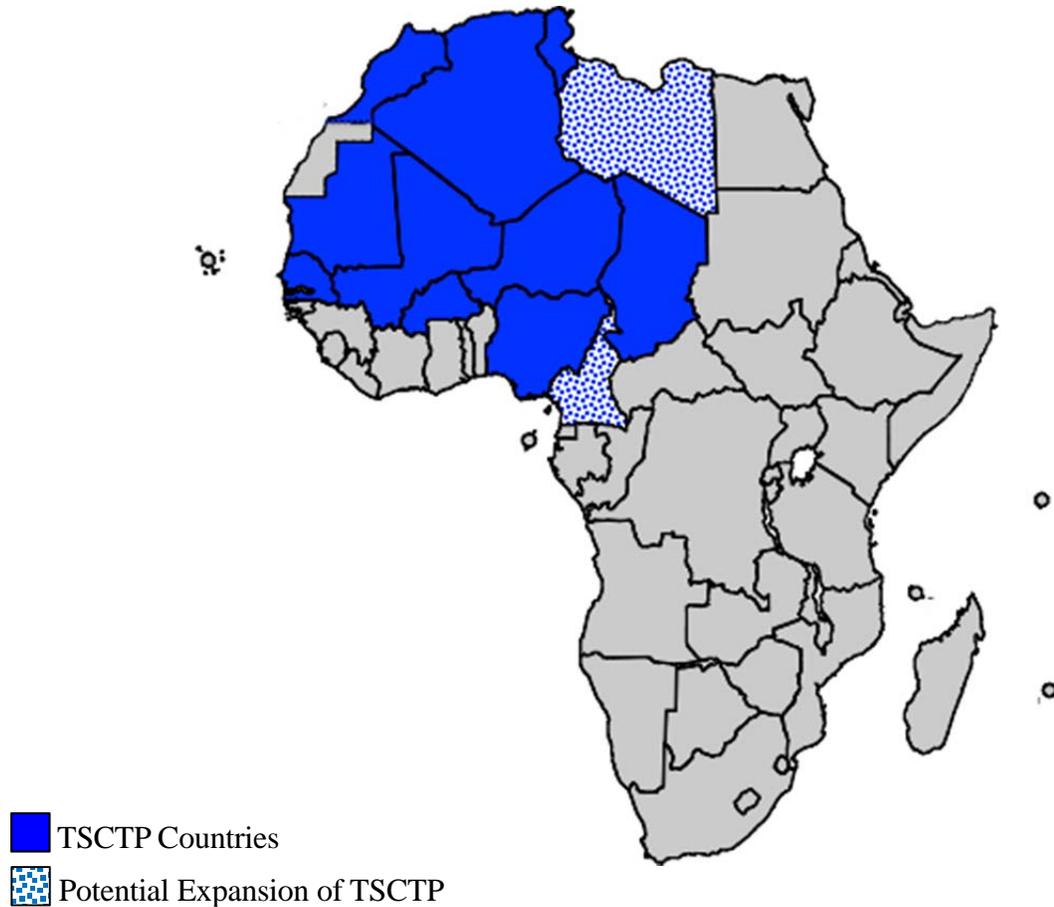
TSCTP Strategy Review (2013)

Following the Tuareg uprising in Mali, the subsequent coup, and the jihadist occupation of the north in 2012, TSCTP stakeholders agreed that the program's framework needed to be strengthened

in order to address the region's security challenges.[30] In March 2013, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman convened a Working Group on the Sahel and Maghreb to conduct a thorough review of the U.S. approach to the region and to ensure that functional and regional bureaus were working together in an effective manner.[31] The outcome of this process was the development of a State-USAID Sahel-Maghreb Strategy, and an interagency review of TSCTP that was a subset of this strategy.[32] Among other things, the TSCTP review recognized that the demise of terrorism and violent extremism could not be addressed by counterterrorism alone, and that TSCTP needed to leverage broader U.S. government efforts to address the underlying issues that inhibit the effectiveness of the program's CT/CVE activities.[33] Accordingly, the review asserted that the program needed better coordination with other bilateral or multilateral entities that are active in the region in order to avoid duplication, share the cost of engagement in the region, and enhance the legitimacy of U.S. efforts.[34] Finally, the review recognized that the program needs improved monitoring and evaluation so as to identify its successes and challenges, and measure its outputs, outcomes, and impacts as a means by which to measure success.[35]

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[30] Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Remarks at the Eighth Annual Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Conference, Keynote Address at the National Defense University, October 30, 2013, http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/216028.htm (accessed February 11, 2014).

[31] Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, "The Growing Crisis in Africa's Sahel Region."

[32] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, November 6, 2013.

[33] *Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy.*

[34] *TSCTP Review; Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy;* Annual Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership Conference, Washington, DC, October 29-31, 2013 (hereafter, Annual TSCTP Conference, 2013).

[35] *TSCTP Review; Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy.*

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Anatomy of the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership

U.S. Government TSCTP Stakeholders

Today, TSCTP is a State Department-led multi-year program that mobilizes resources from across the interagency to counter violent extremism by building the resilience of marginalized communities so that they can resist radicalization and terrorist recruitment, and to counter terrorism by building the long-term counterterrorism capacity of partner nation security forces and facilitating regional security cooperation in the Sahel and Maghreb.[36] Aside from the State Department, the main agencies involved are the Department of Defense and USAID, and, to a lesser extent, the Department of Justice.

At the program planning level at the State Department, five bureaus play a role in TSCTP: the Bureau of African Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT), Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). At the implementation level, at the direction of the Ambassador, the country team, comprising personnel from the State Department and other U.S. government agencies, coordinates and executes TSCTP at each Embassy. Although this differs from mission to mission, the members of the country team who are generally involved in the implementation of TSCTP are the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission, Political Officer, Public Affairs

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[36] Interview with State Department Bureau for African Affairs, Washington, DC, March 25, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013; U.S. Africa Command, *TSCTP Factsheet*, www.africom.mil/NEWSROOM/Document/7432 (accessed January 27, 2014).

Officer, USAID, Defense Attaché, Office of Security Cooperation,[37] Regional Security Officer, a Department of Justice (DoJ) Resident Legal Advisor , a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Legal Attaché, and a representative from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. At the U.S. Embassy in Algeria, there is also a Regional Counterterrorism Coordinator from the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism who supports Ambassadors and country teams in the coordination and implementation of TSCTP programming across the region, and helps embassies utilize Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI) funding for regional training sessions and workshops.[38]

The Department of Defense component of TSCTP was previously Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara (OEF-TS). Established in April 2005, OEF-TS transitioned from an operation to a Program of Record with dedicated resources in December 2006.[39] Originally under U.S. European Command (EUCOM), OEF-TS was identified as a Phase 0 (Shape), Phase I (Deter), and Phase II (Seize the Initiative) operation.[40] When U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established as a unified combatant command in October 2008, OEF-TS was transferred from EUCOM to AFRICOM. OEF-TS became Operation Juniper Shield (OJS) in 2011, and is nested under AFRICOM's North West Africa Campaign Plan. OJS integrates and synchronizes all DoD counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel and Maghreb and is supported by AFRICOM and U.S. Special Operations Command,

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[37] Prior to 2013, there were no Offices of Security Cooperation in Chad, Mauritania, or Niger. Interview with State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Washington, DC, November 18, 2013.

[38] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, November 6, 2013.

[39] Interview with former OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

[40] Interview with former OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013. For an explanation of the phases of combat and stability operations, see Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations,* August 11, 2011, http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_0.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

Africa (SOCAFRICA) through the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Trans Sahara (JSOTF-TS). TSCTP's security cooperation activities are coordinated through the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Office of African Affairs), AFRICOM, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), SOCAFRICA, and JSOTF-TS.

Aside from the DATT and the OSC on the country team, there is no permanent, dedicated DoD presence on the continent for TSCTP. The JSOTF-TS leads capacity-building efforts of partner nation militaries, most commonly through the deployment of temporary duty personnel (TDY), who rotate in-country for periods as short as one month or as long as six months. Depending on the country, a Special Operations Forces Liaison Element may be present to train the partner nation's CT forces through a Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) or a Joint Planning and Assistance Team (JPAT). Some countries also have a Military Information Support Team, which serves in an information operations capacity, and a Civil Military Support Element, which serves in a civic or humanitarian assistance capacity. The SOFLE, MIST, and CMSE are not part of the country team, but can bolster the Embassies' initiatives by providing additional human and financial resources. Their level of integration into the country team depends on civil-military dynamics within the Embassy, and the comfort level of the Ambassador as the Chief of Mission in exerting his or her authority over DoD personnel in-country.

Within USAID, TSCTP activities are coordinated through the Bureau for Africa; the Bureau for the Middle East; the regional USAID West Africa Mission in Accra, Ghana, and its satellite office in Dakar, Senegal; and bilateral USAID Missions in Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, and Senegal. Since Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Tunisia do not have bilateral USAID Missions, they are considered limited-presence countries. As a result, programs in these countries—such as Peace through Development II (PDEVII), which is designed to strengthen the resilience of marginalized communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger to violent extremism—are managed through the regional offices in Accra and Dakar.

Although not formally part of TSCTP, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is a multilateral counterterrorism body that is a major initiative within the U.S. government's broader effort to build the international architecture for countering terrorism through capacity-building. The GCTF Sahel Working Group, which is co-chaired by Algeria and Canada, has priorities that include increasing police cooperation, building legal and judicial cooperation, increasing border security, conducting community engagement to counter extremism, and countering terrorism financing.[41]

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu co-host the official launch of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, New York, on September 22, 2011. [State Department photo/ Public Domain (via Wikimedia Commons)]

Interagency Coordination

Although the countries in the program straddle the geographic responsibilities of the State Department's Bureau of African

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[41] Global Counterterrorism Forum, *Sahel Region Capacity-Building*, http://www.thegctf.org/web/guest/sahel-region-capacity-building (accessed January 27, 2014).

Affairs and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Africa Bureau is the unofficial lead for TSCTP. However, as all TSCTP stakeholders are equal partners in the program, the Africa Bureau does not have directive authority over the other agencies or bureaus. Within TSCTP, decision-making among U.S. government stakeholders is consensus based, and participation in the program itself is voluntary.[42] It is important to note that unlike the Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF–South), which is widely considered the "gold standard" for cross-organizational collaboration,[43] TSCTP does not have a dedicated, co-located staff or a similar programmatic structure that facilitates the tracking of a multitude of moving interagency and regional components.[44]

TSCTP has a Standing Interagency Working Group (SIWG) based in Washington, DC, that meets monthly and is responsible for interagency coordination, overseeing resource allocation, and monitoring progress towards the program's strategic objectives.[45] As of this writing, the program does not have full-time dedicated staff whose duties are confined to TSCTP on a day-to-day basis. In addition to the SIWG, interagency coordination occurs through an annual conference and through monthly video teleconferences (VTCs) between representatives in DC and those in the field.[46] At the mission level, the Ambassador, as the President's personal representative in each country, is the Chief of Mission and head of the country team. The Ambassador

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[42] State Bureau for Counterterrorism, e-mail message to the author, November 7, 2013.

[43] Evan Munsing and Christopher Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force – South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success,* Strategic Perspectives No. 5, Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, June 2011, http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/strategic-perspectives/Strategic-Perspectives-5.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[44] Interview with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

[45] *TSCTP Review.*

[46] Interview with USAID Africa Bureau, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013.

oversees and coordinates U.S. foreign assistance, including TSCTP, in these countries, and all activities are supposed to gain the Ambassador's concurrence beforehand. Consistent with U.S. policy, DoD ensures that its activities in each country are fully coordinated with the country team. Depending on the Embassy, the DCM or one of the Political Officers acts as the country team coordinator for TSCTP on behalf of the Ambassador. The country team may have a TSCTP working group, or relevant country team stakeholders may coordinate TSCTP activities through the weekly country team meetings or though Counterterrorism, Counter Violent Extremism, Law Enforcement, Peace and Security, and Counterintelligence Working Groups.[47]

In order to facilitate higher-level attention and coordination within the program, an interagency Deputy Assistant Secretary-level Oversight Committee was created as part of the 2013 TSCTP strategy review.[48] This Oversight Committee meets quarterly to validate TSCTP strategies and programs, review progress towards programmatic objectives, adjudicate disputes among interagency stakeholders, and prepare decisions that need to be made at the level of the Deputies and Principals.[49] In order to improve the execution of the program on a day-to-day basis, the program may acquire sufficient staffing in the form of a program manager with support staff and an operational support fund.[50] Furthermore, per the 2013 review, an additional Regional Counterterrorism Coordinator position may be established at one of the U.S. Embassies in the Sahel, to complement the Regional Counterterrorism Coordinator post in Algiers and improve the

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[47] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[48] *TSCTP Review;* Annual TSCTP Conference, 2013.

[49] *TSCTP Review.*

[50] Ibid.; interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013.

coordination of U.S. counterterrorism efforts throughout the region.[51]

Funding

As a whole, TSCTP receives between $90M and $160M per year, of which approximately $50-55M is dedicated State and USAID funding from several sources: the Economic Support Fund (ESF); Development Assistance (DA); International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE); Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) – Anti Terrorism Assistance (ATA); and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO).[52] The remainder of the program's funding comes from globally competitive foreign assistance accounts that support and complement TSCTP objectives, including the following funding streams: the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC); the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI); Counterterrorism Finance (CTF); Section 1206 (Global Train and Equip), the former Section 1207 (Security and Stabilization Assistance), and Section 1208 (Support to Foreign Forces); the Combatant Commander Initiative Fund (CCIF); the Counternarcotics Program; the Developing Country Combined Exercise Program (DCCEP); and the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP).[53]

The SIWG oversees the program's budgeting and coordinates resource allocation across the interagency.[54] Even so, it can be challenging to track which funding authorities funded which activities in which countries during any given fiscal year.[55] Each

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[51] *TSCTP Review.*

[52] Interviews with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013, and State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013; *Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy.*

[53] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013; JCOA, *Mali; Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy.*

[54] *TSCTP Review.*

[55] Interview with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013; JCOA, *Mali.*

interagency stakeholder has a different perspective on which activities – and their associated funding streams – fall under TSCTP.[56] Additionally, congressional oversight of the program is challenging, as multiple congressional committees have jurisdiction over the range of authorities that support TSCTP objectives and TSCTP-related activities.[57]

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[56] Multiple author interviews across the interagency between March and September 2013.

[57] Interviews with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

Functional Categories of TSCTP Engagement

Six functional categories of TSCTP engagement were derived from interviews conducted with TSCTP stakeholders and the *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plans* of each U.S. Embassy in the region: Military Capacity-Building; Law Enforcement Anti-Terrorism Capacity-Building; Justice Sector Counterterrorism Capacity-Building; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Community Engagement; and Vocational Training. This section describes the functional categories of TSCTP engagement, including which U.S. government stakeholders are involved in each area, who their partner nation counterparts are, and what types of TSCTP activities occur across the ten TSCTP countries.

Military Capacity-Building

Under TSCTP and depending on the country, the DATT, OSC, and SOFLE build the capacity of partner nations' CT forces to monitor and control borders, operate and patrol in remote areas, and identify and react to the presence of terrorist groups in their countries. The security forces that DoD works with in partner nations range from special operations forces, to general purpose forces, to members of the gendarmerie who have given up their arrest authority. (DoD has no authority to work with partner nation security forces that have arrest authority.)

Senegalese Colonel Boubacar Seck, Flintlock 11 Exercise Director, confers with U.S. Army Colonel Nestor Sadler, Commander of Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara, during a break at the Trans-Sahara Security Symposium Senior Leader in Dakar, Senegal as part of Exercise Flintlock 11. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Major Bryan Purtell, Flintlock 11 Public Affairs)

Across the countries involved in TSCTP, these activities include:

- Improving basic infantry and special forces skills (i.e., marksmanship, communications, first aid, vehicle maintenance, air mobility, ground mobility, raids, close-quarters battle, long-range reconnaissance, and hostage rescue) through JCETs and JPATs. [58]

- Increasing communications and logistics capabilities through assisting in the development of an Army Special Operations Command, a National Command and Control

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[58] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

Center, a Mobile Command Center, and a network of Joint Operations Centers.[59]

- Improving partner nation capacity to synchronize intelligence through the Military Intelligence Basics Course for Africa (MIBOCA) and the Military Intelligence Basics Non-Commissioned Officer Course for Africa (MINOCA).[60]

- Facilitating conferences and workshops for partner nations' defense ministers and military intelligence chiefs, intended to strengthen relationships, develop trust, and ultimately facilitate regional counterterrorism cooperation, communications, and intelligence sharing.[61]

- Nominating partner nations' military and civilian officials to participate in the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) at U.S. Professional Military Education (PME) institutions, which provides strategic- and operational-level education for personnel with a direct role in combating terrorism.[62]

- Participating in Flintlock, an annual AFRICOM-sponsored, JSOTF-TS-conducted regional counterterrorism exercise whose purpose is to foster regional collaboration and interoperability in order to reduce the sanctuary and support for violent extremist organizations.[63] Exercise

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[59] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mali,* submitted May 16, 2011; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[60] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[61] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[62] U.S. Africa Command, *Fact Sheet: Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program,* www.africom.mil/Newsroom/Document/10033/fact-sheet-ctfp (accessed January 27, 2014).

[63] U.S. Africa Command, *Exercise Flintlock Factsheet,* http://www.africom.mil/Newsroom/Document/9843/fact-sheet-exercise-flintlock (accessed January 27, 2014).

Flintlock has taken place in the Sahel since 2006, and has included participation from African, U.S., and European forces, including those of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Canada, Tunisia, Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

With residents of Marke, Niger, watching from a hilltop at the edge of their village, Senegalese commandos enter the town as part of a "cordon and search" exercise during Flintlock 2014. (Photo by Peter Tinti, permission granted to the author)

Law Enforcement Anti-Terrorism Capacity-Building

Through the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the country team's Regional Security Officer oversees Anti-Terrorism Assistance for partner nations' law enforcement entities, including the national and municipal police, gendarmerie, customs and border control, and airport security. The purpose of ATA training is to enhance law enforcement's investigative capacity, build response capacity to a critical incident, and strengthen law enforcement's ability to protect critical infrastructure and secure borders against trafficking of drugs, people, and other contraband (i.e., small arms and light

weapons and man-portable air-defense systems).[64] Increasing the capacity of partner nations' law enforcement entities ideally allows the Embassy to better protect the American expatriate community, and to develop relationships with partner nations' law enforcement personnel, thereby gaining insights on terrorist tactics, techniques, and procedures.[65] Depending on the availability of funding, DoD counternarcotics funding (Sections 1004, 1033, and 1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act) can support training, equipment, and minor military construction for partner nations' security forces engaged in counternarcotics and counterterrorism.[66]

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[64] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Burkina Faso,* submitted May 16, 2011, U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Tunisia,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011; interview with U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, April 23-26, 2013.

[65] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[66] Interview with U.S. Africa Command Counter Narcoterrorism personnel, Washington, DC, October 31, 2013.

Police cadets attending class at a police academy in Niamey, Niger. (Photo by the author)

As part of their duties, the RSO facilitates funding for mobility, communications, and equipment, such as the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES). PISCES is a biometric database that allows immigration officials to use fingerprints and an electronic scan of passport photos to develop an immigration stop list at international airports and land border crossings in an effort to interdict potential terrorists.[67] The RSO also coordinates classroom- and field-based training courses on topics such as quality control of civil aviation security, border control management, vital installation security, recognition of fraudulent documents, digital forensics investigation, interdiction of terrorist activities, explosives incident countermeasures, canine detection of explosives, hostage negotiation, surveillance detection, and SWAT training.[68]

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[67] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, April 23-26, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[68] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar,

Justice Sector Counterterrorism Capacity-Building

Through working with the Ministry of Justice (judges, prosecutors, and the corrections system), gendarmerie, and Financial Intelligence Units, several U.S. government bureaucracies play a role in building the counterterrorism capacity of partner nations' justice sectors. The Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) within the Department of Justice provides a Resident Legal Advisor, and the FBI provides a Legal Attaché, whose primary purpose is to support their agency's investigations in-country. Depending on funding from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and DoJ's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), the LEGAT may also be involved in partner nation capacity-building to investigate and apprehend terrorist suspects.[69] Depending on their presence and scope of work on some country teams, USAID and INL can also be involved in justice sector counterterrorism capacity-building.

The purpose of justice sector counterterrorism capacity-building in TSCTP countries is to strengthen and harmonize counterterrorism legislation, to counter transnational organized crime (including building anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing capacity), to improve prison management in order to counter prison radicalization, and to increase the partner nation's judicial and legislative capacity to prosecute and

Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Senegal,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[69] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

imprison terrorists.[70] Some of the specific activities taking place are as follows:

- In Morocco, USAID and INL conducted a program focused on preventing prison radicalization, providing literacy and skills training for prisoners about to be released (in order to reduce recidivism), and improving the quality of life in youth detention centers by improving the qualifications of the staff.[71]

- In Nigeria, the RLA is providing technical assistance to help the country establish a counter terrorist financing unit, and INL is training law enforcement personnel on financial investigations and cybercrime. [72]

- The United States has a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with Algeria, which should help enhance legal cooperation.[73] Due to Algeria's domestic experience with counterterrorism, the nature of U.S. engagement is a matter of sharing best practices based on U.S. counterterrorism experience from around the world, and offering Algerian law enforcement more advanced technical assistance and training.[74] The LEGAT has offered training on how to target and dismantle criminal or terrorist organizations, while additional training through ICITAP covers cybercrime legal statutes, post-blast

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[70] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[71] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[72] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[73] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[74] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013.

investigations, combating public corruption, and improving forensic laboratories.

- In Mauritania, the RLA is organizing a regional workshop on anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing, and is supporting the African Union's regional training with Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia, and Libya.[75]

Public Diplomacy and Information Operations

Public Diplomacy and Information Operations were the most commonly cited areas of interagency cooperation across the TSCTP countries due to the fact that the CVE messaging responsibilities of most TSCTP stakeholders tend to overlap.[76] The country team's Public Affairs Section (PAS), USAID personnel,[77] and Military Information Support Teams work with partner nation NGOs and law enforcement to conduct public diplomacy and information operations in order to promote moderation and tolerance, counter violent extremist ideology, and encourage populations to report security threats to local law enforcement agencies and the military. Depending on the country, MIST activities are carried out as part of AFRICOM's Operation Objective Voice (OOV) and PAS activities are carried out in cooperation with the State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. Public diplomacy is also an element of USAID's Peace through Development II in Chad and Niger.[78]

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[75] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[76] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[77] For additional information on USAID CVE efforts, see United States Agency for International Development, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,* February 2009; United States Agency for International Development, *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming,* October 2009, and United States Agency for International Development, *USAID/West Africa: Peace Through Development: Program Assessment Report,* March 2011.

[78] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013. In addition to Chad and Niger, Burkina Faso is part of PDEVII, but CVE messaging is less prominent there based

Across TSCTP countries, the following are examples of public diplomacy and information operations:

- In Niger, PAS has a Resilient Voices radio series that consists of public service announcements delivered by well-known local opinion shapers (religious leaders, chiefs, media figures, etc.), using the motto "My Niger, My Country" to spread messages of moderation and national unity. These messages are delivered via community and commercial radio in local languages across the country.[79] Having become aware of this program in Niger, PAS and MIST in Mauritania were considering a radio program akin to Resilient Voices to promote tolerance and national unity in the runup to parliamentary and local elections in the fall of 2013.[80]

- In Mali, the country team is considering a series of village music festivals and peace forums throughout the country in conjunction with local NGOs, and a Unity and Peace Messaging Campaign that would use influential Malian opinion shapers to promote messages of reconciliation, national unity, tolerance, and diversity.[81]

- At the behest of the Mauritanian government, MIST has produced handbills to offer amnesty to those who wish to leave terrorist groups, and billboards advertising the "911" equivalent for citizens with information on terrorist activity.[82] In Nigeria, MIST works with the Nigerian Army, Police, and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to produce billboards to inform the local

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on the Ambassador's concerns that Burkina Faso is a different context than Chad and Niger and faces a lower risk of extremism.

[79] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, April 23-26, 2013.

[80] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[81] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[82] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mauritania,* submitted May 16, 2011.

population about illicit activity and advise them to report these activities to the local authorities.[83]

- In one of the TSCTP countries that has been resistant to the presence of a MIST, the Ambassador is considering using a virtual MIST that would be based at AFRICOM headquarters in Germany, but could provide the human and financial resources to bolster the country team's CVE efforts.

Community Engagement

The country team's Public Affairs Section, USAID, and Civil-Military Support Elements are involved in key leader, youth, and civil society engagement to mitigate conflict, counter violent extremism, and address community disenfranchisement. In some cases, the RSO has also been involved in community engagement activities. Across TSCTP countries, the following are examples of community engagement:

- In Mali, USAID organized a Cultural Day for Peace in Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu, which gathered civil society, the military, and the government to discuss the main sources of conflict and mechanisms of conflict mitigation. The plan was for these parties to subsequently develop an action plan for the government, evaluate past actions, and propose new solutions for the following year. This program started in 2010 and was to run until 2013 until it was disrupted by the instability in northern Mali and the March 2012 coup.[84]

- In Tunisia, there was an exchange program between the Boy Scouts of America in Wyoming and the national leadership of the Tunisian Scouts to introduce activities that promoted citizenship skills.[85]

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[83] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[84] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[85] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Tunisia,* submitted May 16, 2011.

- In Burkina Faso, PAS has asked a local Islamic NGO to do a survey of Koranic schools throughout the country because there is a dearth of knowledge on the number of students in attendance, the type of school curricula, and the possible foreign origins of school funding. The country team and the Burkinabé government viewed this survey as a necessary precursor to bringing Koranic schools into Burkina Faso's secondary school system, eliminating foreign extremist ideology from the curriculum, and developing a trajectory for the sustainable economic livelihoods of future graduates. This survey of Koranic schools may one day be complementary to the vocational training that is currently part of PDEVII.[86]

- PAS also runs the Sahel Volunteers Project in Burkina Faso, which is a project modeled on the Peace Corps. Since Peace Corps volunteers had to pull out of Sahel region of the country (north of the Djibo-Dori line) for security reasons, the Sahel Volunteers Project was established to counter the image that the United States was disengaging from the region. Alternatively, Burkinabé alumni of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs exchange programs such as the Fulbright Fellowship, do community engagement in the region for a year, which includes participating in an English Language Academy. Last year, due to the expanding USAID presence in Burkina Faso and the initiation of PDEVII, alumni of the Sahel Volunteers Project were hired at the end of their tenure as implementing partners in the field for PDEVII.[87]

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[86] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[87] Ibid.

A Chadian imam (right) receives a completion certificate from the two Nigerian clergy, one Muslim and one Protestant, who participated in a five-day workshop to promote interfaith dialogue. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy N'Djamena, Chad)

- The USAID mission in Nigeria has a program called Training of Leaders for Religious and National Co-Existence (TOLERANCE), which started in October 2012 and will continue for 5 years. TOLERANCE is being implemented in three states in northern Nigeria (Borno, Plateau, and Baluchi states) and will be expanded to three more states (Kaduna, Kano, and Sokoto) in the future. TOLERANCE is designed to deepen interfaith understanding, build trust and relationships, and strengthen early warning systems, in order to reduce ethno-religious violence in the region. As part of TOLERANCE, USAID works through Nigerian NGOs to target leaders of national, state, and local governments and build their capacity for conflict mitigation, alternate dispute resolution, and early warning and response. There is also a media outreach component, in which an imam and a priest engage in dialogue on their stances on various issues, to

counter the manipulation of religion and the proliferation of misperceptions.[88]

- In Nigeria, USAID also works with local NGOs to establish Conflict Mitigation and Management Regional Councils (CMMRCs) in five volatile states – three in the north and two in the Niger Delta. Each CMMRC comprises opinion leaders and other influential and respected citizens from civil society, the faith-based community, and the government. The goal of the CMMRC is to strengthen collaboration between the government and civil society to reduce causes of communal tensions in these regions. There have also been efforts to encourage communities to develop peace declarations among themselves, as these provide a mechanism for leaders to meet and establish relationships to mitigate conflict.[89]

- In Mauritania, PAS initiated sports diplomacy to engage local youth and keep them away from extremist ideologies.[90] Similarly, the RSO in Senegal had supported a youth soccer program by giving equipment to train National Police officers as soccer coaches to build their relationships with local youths.[91]

- In Algeria, the country team has been working on a community policing program that would parallel the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program in the United States. Under this program, police officers would be trained to work in local schools to reduce mistrust between the students and law enforcement officers.[92] Likewise, in

[88] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[89] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[90] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[91] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[92] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013.

Chad, the RSO has proposed a program to work with the Municipal Police in N'Djamena to distribute school supplies to students to help them develop rapport with the youth population.[93]

- Although not explicitly part of TSCTP, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia are part of the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, which offers small grants, civic education, and media training to civil society organizations, community leaders, youth and women activists, and private sector groups, to advance their reform efforts.[94]

A 2010 cultural festival, funded from the PDEV project, was organized in the desert oasis of Faya Largeau, capital of the

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[93] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[94] State Department Bureau of Near East Affairs, "The U.S. –Middle East Partnership Initiative," May 2, 2012, http://photos.state.gov/libraries/tunis/5/PDFs/MEPI_FactSheet_English.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

northern Borkou region. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad)

In some partner nations, USAID and the CMSE engage the partner nation's population through building infrastructure or through the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Whether done to gain access, gain placement, or contribute to countering violent extremism, these activities focus on demonstrating service delivery in austere environments that may be vulnerable to VEOs and may normally be inaccessible to the partner nation's government. In Mauritania, CMSE delivered humanitarian assistance to austere areas in conjunction with the Mauritanian military's Assistance of Civil Military team (ACM). Such humanitarian assistance takes the form of medical civic action programs (MEDCAPs), and veterinarian civic action programs (VETCAPs). The Mauritanian military has two 3-man ACM teams and is looking to create seven more so that there will be one per military zone. [95] Prior to the coup in Mali, USAID had been planning on using small grants to rehabilitate hospitals, schools, and community centers in the north, and this project may still be implemented in the future.[96]

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[95] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[96] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

Jiwoyo Village, Mali - A U.S. Army veterinarian assigned to Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara inoculates a goat with dewormer as part of a veterinary civil action program May 11, 2010, during Exercise Flintlock 10. Both U.S. and Malian veterinarians inoculated nearly 500 cattle and goats belonging to farmers in the Jiwoyo Village community with dewormer medication. (Photo by U.S. Army Master Sergeant Donald Sparks, Flintlock 10 Public Affairs)

Vocational Training

USAID, often through PDEVII, and the Political Section are involved with vocational training for out-of-school youth and support for the development of income-generating activities. These programs are designed to mitigate the recruitment of marginalized populations into terrorist organizations by increasing opportunities for social and economic inclusion.[97] Although vocational training programs are usually run through local NGOs, Mauritania has been an exception. Within the Mauritanian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development (MAED), there is a National Vocational Training Institute

[97] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, April 23-26, 2013. See also Earl Gast, Testimony of Assistant Administrator Earl Gast before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, December 5, 2012, http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/testimony-assistant-administrator-earl-gast-senate (accessed January 27, 2014).

(INAP), which oversees all vocational training in Mauritania.[98] The rationale behind USAID working directly with the Government of Mauritania was that Mauritania was originally supposed to be part of PDEVII along with Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger. However, while the Mauritanian government wanted the vocational training element of PDEVII, it refused to have that training administered through NGOs. An exception was made such that the program is now executed through a Limited Scope Grant Agreement (LSGA), which means that the Government of Mauritania covers the cost of the program, submits costs and receipts to be audited by USAID, and then is reimbursed.[99]

Across TSCTP countries, course selection for vocational training is determined through an initial environmental assessment of target communities so that the vocations for which the students are being trained are a match for the local economies.[100] Depending on the country, vocational training can be as short as two months with a one-month apprenticeship or as long as nine months of training followed by an apprenticeship of indeterminate length.[101] Vocational training courses include carpentry, cloth dyeing, sewing, metalwork, auto mechanical repair, electrical repair, horticulture, and information technology. In Mauritania, building technical expertise on solar energy may become an area of focus, since the interior of the country relies on that form of energy.[102] Some of these vocational training programs include the possibility for graduates to apply for small grants to start their own businesses upon completion of the program.

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[98] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[99] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Interview with IRD (implementing partner for PDEVII) N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[102] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

In Algeria, vocational training took the form of the University Linkage Program (ULP), which seeks to bridge the gap between the skills taught in Algerian universities and the skills required in the job market. As part of ULP, the Embassy has supported the creation of career centers in four Algerian universities to assist future graduates with interviewing and resume writing, thus helping address the high unemployment rate for college graduates.[103]

Aside from these types of vocational training courses, some country teams see English language training as a means by which to counter violent extremism by facilitating access to a skill that presumably triples the participants' earning potential.[104] In Algeria, the Middle East Partnership Initiative has funded the English Access Microscholarship Program to enhance English language instruction.[105] In Niger, the country team requested funds to expand English teacher training in the American Corners in Agadez.[106]

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[103] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[104] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013.

[105] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[106] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011.

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TSCTP Planning and Implementation Challenges

This section covers TSCTP planning and implementation challenges from the strategic to the tactical level, based primarily on interviews from TSCTP stakeholders within the State Department (AF, NEA, CT, PM), USAID (Bureau for Africa), and DoD (OSD-Policy, AFRICOM, SOCOM, SOCAFRICA), and the U.S. Embassy country teams in TSCTP countries. Some of the challenges listed herein have also been recognized as such by the 2013 TSCTP strategy review, and may be remedied in future iterations of the program.

TSCTP Strategy

In July 2008, the GAO released a report critiquing TSCTP for lacking a comprehensive, integrated strategy to guide the implementation of the program's activities.[107] Specifically, GAO stated that the TSCTP base documents developed at the outset of the program in 2005 lacked: a clear definition of the program's goals and objectives, and milestones linked to these objectives; a definition of the roles and missions of interagency stakeholders; the development of indicators that measure program outputs and outcomes; and the identification of necessary resources to achieve the program's goals.[108] To differing extents, the State Department, DoD, and USAID agreed with the GAO's assessment,[109] yet they continued to use the 2005 base documents for strategic guidance and adjust their approach to the program as the need arose.[110] According to GAO, strategic planning protocol calls for strategic

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[107] GAO, *Actions Needed.*

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013.

guidance to be revised every three to five years, and in August 2012, GAO listed the status of these recommendations as "Closed – Not Implemented."[111]

Although the Africa Bureau at the State Department is the program lead for TSCTP, all stakeholders are equal partners that work the best they can in an integrated fashion.[112] While the lack of directive authority can be beneficial for preserving equal partnership within this interagency construct, it can complicate the operationalization of the program's strategy, making it unclear how to adjudicate disputes or how to designate which agencies are supported or supporting on various program activities. Since interagency participation in TSCTP is voluntary, it was necessary for the 2005 TSCTP strategy to maintain a balance between accounting for the equities of multiple bureaucracies within a consortium of U.S. government agencies, and the cohesion and common vision that would emanate from stronger guidance.[113] Consequently, the TSCTP strategy was said to lack an operational plan linking program activities to desired endstates, leading agencies to pursue disjointed agendas.[114]

In 2010, TSCTP stakeholders attempted to rewrite the TSCTP strategy, but the effort was derailed due to an inability to come to an interagency consensus on the nature of the AQIM threat and the range of possible means by which the U.S. government should address it.[115] Specifically, State and DoD could not agree on the

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[111] Interview with U.S. Government Accountability Office, Washington, DC, March 12, 2013; GAO, *Actions Needed.*

[112] Interview with former official from OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

[113] Interview with former official from OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013; interview with USAID Africa Bureau, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013; interview with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, November 13, 2013.

[114] JCOA, *Mali;* interview with former official from OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013; interview with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

[115] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013; interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

language that defined the desired endstate of TSCTP – to "deter" or "defeat" AQIM.[116] This distinction matters because the different terms require distinct programmatic responses; the use of one would have implied Indirect Action (i.e., working "by, with, and through" partner nation militaries), whereas the other would have implied Direct Action (i.e., "boots on the ground").[117]

Some TSCTP stakeholders believed that the combined efforts of the U.S. government and those of partner nations were successfully containing AQIM, and that with enough time, it would "wither on the vine."[118] Other stakeholders believed that the AQIM threat was growing but it had not yet reached the threshold at which indirect action would cease to be effective. Although security force assistance under TSCTP was supposed to build long-term partner nation capacity, there was a fear that the level of investment was too little and too slow for partner nations to address the threat on their own in the near term.[119] As a result, some parts of DoD believed that it needed to posture itself so that it could adopt a more operational, direct action approach to prevent AQIM capabilities from growing.[120] Yet the options DoD proposed to move from indirect to direct action were, in the words of one analyst, "like a light switch," meaning that DoD

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[116] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013; interview with USAID Africa Bureau, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013.

[117] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, November 26, 2013.

[118] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[119] Interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 1, 2013; JCOA, *Mali*; Andre LeSage, *The Evolving Threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, July 2011, http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/134649/ipublicat iondocument_singledocument/a6a73a97-d900-4d81-bf6b-fe7597019ad2/en/SF+268+Le+Sage.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[120] Interview with State Department Bureau for African Affairs, Washington, DC, March 25, 2013.

proposed to do too much or too little, with no moderate courses of action to mitigate the State Department's concerns about militarizing the region.[121] Ironically, this issue was a legitimate debate for the broader role of the U.S. military in the region, but was outside of the scope of TSCTP, which is, at its core, a capacity-building program with an indirect action approach.[122]

This debate over the scope of TSCTP, which predated the 2010 attempt to rewrite the program's strategy, has affected DoD's ability to secure the necessary permissions from Chiefs of Mission to operate in the region.[123] For force protection purposes, the 1997 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the State Department and DoD on the Security of DoD Elements and Personnel in Foreign Areas sought to clearly define the authority and responsibility for the security of DoD elements and personnel in foreign areas not under the commander of a Geographic Combatant Command (GCC). As part of local implementing arrangements, the Chief of Mission and the GCC commander negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) that lays out respective roles, responsibilities, and relationships, followed by two annexes that list every DoD element in-country and assign responsibility for their force protection to either the Chief of Mission (Annex A) or GCC commander (Annex B). Department of Defense personnel who are part of the country team, such as the DATT and the OSC, would ordinarily be under Annex A, while DoD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities, such as the SOFLE, MIST, and CMSE, would ordinarily be under Annex B.[124]

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[121] Interview with Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, April 9, 2013.

[122] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, November 6, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013.

[123] Interviews with U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL, March 13-14, 2013.

[124] Major Thomas W. Murrey, Jr., U.S. Air Force Assistant Legal Advisor, U.S. European Command, "Khobar Towers' Progeny: The

Regardless of these force protection arrangements, and because TSCTP countries are not active theaters of military combat, DoD activities require permissions from the Chief of Mission. Since the Chief of Mission has the prerogative to decline permissions for DoD activity, disagreements between State and DoD on the issue of permissions can constrain military capacity-building in TSCTP countries. Some Ambassadors are overwhelmed by DoD presence in the region and may be unsure of how to assert their authority.[125] The Chief of Mission's willingness to accept DoD presence varies from country to country, and is often a function of the Chief of Mission's relationship with DoD personnel, the country team's ability to support DoD presence, or concerns regarding the country's fragile political environment.[126] In some cases, for SOF to receive the requisite permissions, the Ambassador requires advanced notice of travel to remote areas and extensive force protection protocols such as the use of convoys and GPS tracking.[127] In other cases, due to force protection concerns or fears of upsetting the social or political equilibrium within the partner nation, Chiefs of Mission have prevented SOF from traveling outside the capital city or training local security forces in potentially dangerous parts of the country.[128] In order to override a Chief of Mission's decision,

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Development of Force Protection," *The Army Lawyer*, October 1999, https://www.jagcnet.army.mil/DOCLIBS/ARMYLAWYER.NSF/c82d f279f9445da185256e5b005244ee/12fe83547113f16685256e5b0054df ba/$FILE/Article%201.pdf. Accessed January 27, 2014.

[125] Interview with former State Department Bureau for African Affairs official, Washington, DC, November 13, 2013.

[126] GAO, *Actions Needed.*

[127] Interview with U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[128] Interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013.

TSCTP stakeholders would need to go as high as the Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State – or even as high as the President of the United States.[129]

Adding to potential frictions between the State Department and DoD, SOFLE, MIST, and CMSE may be unaccustomed to working with Embassies that are not in combat zones, and to understanding the culture of the country team.[130] Some of these personnel may have served in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade, and see that civil-military dynamic as their primary referent for how to operate within TSCTP partner nations.[131] In addition, TDY personnel have a short-term, rotational presence in-country, which means that some DoD personnel are constantly having to relearn the same lessons and build relationships with the country team.[132] Consequently, SOF's rotational presence and lack of tenure can strain relationships within the country team, and these personnel may be less likely to understand the factors that drive the Chief of Mission's stance on permissions for DoD activity.[133]

As evidenced by the aforementioned "defeat vs. deter" impasse and the issue of permissions for DoD personnel, TSCTP was in need of an adjudication mechanism at the program's strategic and tactical levels. Yet, interagency stakeholders proved unwilling to expend the political capital to have these disputes adjudicated at a higher level of government.[134] The National Security Staff was

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[129] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, November 26, 2013.

[130] Interview with USAID Africa Bureau, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[131] Interview with former personnel from U.S. Africa Command, Arlington, VA, January 24, 2013; discussion with Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, Washington, DC, September 24, 2013.

[132] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[133] Interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 1, 2013.

[134] JCOA, *Mali.*

supposed to arbitrate on the 2010 rewrite of the TSCTP strategy, but this was never completed or brought up for higher-level adjudication.[135] Some of the need for higher-level adjudication of interagency disputes may be addressed by the DAS-level Oversight Committee, established in 2013. Additionally, with the 2013 TSCTP strategy review, interagency stakeholders have dealt with the "deter vs. defeat" debate by stating that TSCTP seeks to "contain, disrupt, degrade, counter, and ultimately defeat the threat posed by al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and associated VEOs in the Trans-Sahara region."[136] This language is more of a continuum with short-, medium-, and long-term goals.[137]

Interagency Coordination

As a program, TSCTP has so many moving parts that at times, it can be difficult to conceptualize how TSCTP activities fit together as part and parcel of a regional, interagency approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism.[138] TSCTP stakeholders spoke of lacking a larger picture, and trying to "make sense of puzzle pieces."[139] Among all of the TSCTP stakeholders, the members of the Standing Interagency Working Group are most likely to have a comprehensive understanding of the activities taking place within the program across time and space. While each agency could acquire visibility of the TSCTP activities of other stakeholders, there was no real-time information-sharing mechanism to facilitate a Common Operating Picture for the program.[140] As a result, TSCTP stakeholders believed that interagency coordination would be

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[135] State Bureau for Counterterrorism, e-mail message to the author, November 7, 2013.

[136] *Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy.*

[137] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, November 26, 2013.

[138] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[139] Interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

[140] Ibid.

more likely to occur by coincidence than by design, due to this situational awareness gap at the implementation level.[141]

Some TSCTP stakeholders noted the lack of a forcing mechanism to push the program's many moving parts together.[142] Although TSCTP stakeholders used conferences, VTCs, and working groups to maintain situational awareness, these coordination mechanisms were cited as more useful for meeting headquarters and interagency counterparts from across the region than as a forum to delve into regional and interagency areas of collaboration.[143] TSCTP stakeholders also reported insufficient mechanisms to facilitate subsequent action or follow through on the topics discussed, making the annual conference more a "meet and greet" than a forum for deliberation that could lead to future decision-making.[144]

Field-based Regional Coordination

A key critique of TSCTP was that the rhetoric of regionalism did not match the reality of the program.[145] While at the strategic level, TSCTP stakeholders may aspire to approach the program regionally, the U.S. government tends to implement program activities bilaterally, and with insufficient coordination among country team counterparts in other countries.[146] The research conducted for this study found that there were many opinions as to which agencies should fulfill the function of regional coordination. For example, while SOCAFRICA believed that

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[141] Interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 1, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[142] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[143] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[144] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[145] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interviews with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

[146] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

regional coordination was the job of members of the country team, one country team believed that regional coordination was not within the Embassy's purview.[147] Another interviewee believed that AFRICOM's Regional Engagement Division should be responsible for coordinating DoD's regional engagement in TSCTP countries.[148] Similarly, the State Department's Africa Bureau believed that, for example, the Public Affairs officers in the Africa Bureau at Main State should play a role in coordinating the Public Affairs officers in TSCTP countries.[149]

The Standing Interagency Working Group in Washington, DC, plays an important role in convening TSCTP stakeholders at the strategic and policy levels, but plays a lesser role in field-based regional coordination. Across, and even within, agencies, geographic divisions create challenges for interagency planning and the coordination of funding and authorities.[150] On the State Department side, one factor that may have contributed to the program's coordination challenges was that TSCTP was spread across regional seams within the department, with the Bureau for African Affairs responsible for Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, and the Bureau for Near East Affairs responsible for Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. On the DoD side, regional coordination at AFRICOM can also be challenging, since its North, West, and East Regional Engagement Divisions cover different TSCTP countries.[151] In order to increase field-based regional coordination, TSCTP stakeholders have considered expanding monthly VTCs to include stakeholders at the headquarters level and at each of the individual TSCTP

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[147] Interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[148] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[149] Interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013.

[150] JCOA, *Mali;* interviews with U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL, March 13-14, 2013.

[151] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, November 26, 2013.

country teams, but this initiative would face technological limitations on the continent, and runs the risk of making such broad VTC participation more frustrating than practical.[152]

TSCTP is a regional program and while inputs from program planners at headquarters and from Embassy sections on the country team are taken into account, each Chief of Mission ultimately has the prerogative to shape what U.S. government programs actually look like, once executed in-country. This can keep TSCTP from fully reaching its potential as a regional program.[153] Here, the case of Burkina Faso's involvement in USAID's regional Peace through Development PDEVII program is salient. In addition to Chad and Niger, Burkina Faso is part of PDEVII. The contract for PDEVII was awarded in 2011, but was not executed in Burkina Faso until January 2013 due to the then-Ambassador's concerns. In order to cut costs, there had been an attempt to repurpose CVE messaging campaigns from Chad and Niger for use in Burkina Faso. However, the Ambassador was reportedly concerned that since Burkina Faso had a different local context than Chad or Niger, these campaigns were not appropriate for the country and ran the risk of doing more harm than good.[154] Furthermore, the Ambassador believed it would be disingenuous for the implementing partner to have an American as the in-country project director tasked with instructing the Burkinabé on moderation against violent extremist ideologies, and insisted on having a Burkinabé project director.[155] PDEVII in Burkina Faso did eventually get off the ground, later than PDEVII in Chad and Niger, but has a greater focus on youth engagement and vocational technical education than on moderate voices.

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[152] Interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013; State Bureau for Counterterrorism, e-mail message to the author, November 7, 2013.

[153] Interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[154] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[155] Ibid.

TSCTP's Ability to Address Structural Weaknesses

While TSCTP represented some level of appetite on the part of the U.S. government to address the drivers of instability in the Sahel and Maghreb, it was akin to "throwing a band-aid on a chest wound."[156] Some of the countries in the region are poor and underdeveloped, with fragile political and economic institutions, and limited ability to respond to security threats within their territories. With such pervasive structural weaknesses, even small shocks could cause these countries to run off the rails.[157] Indeed, European security officials had expressed skepticism about the Pan-Sahel Initiative, the predecessor to TSCTP, and were concerned that U.S. military involvement in the region would address short-term security threats but would not contribute to sustainable stability. Moreover, they feared that the presence of U.S. troops in the region could have a "magnet effect," thereby creating a problem where there had previously been none.[158] Other critiques of TSCTP echoed the need for balanced engagement in the region, premised on diplomatic and peacebuilding initiatives in order to prevent a partner nation's military involvement in undergoverned areas from exacerbating extant tensions and pushing local citizens into the arms of criminal or terrorist networks.[159]

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[156] Phone interview with former official from OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Washington, DC, 29 March 2013.

[157] Interview with State Department Bureau for African Affairs, Washington, DC, March 25, 2013.

[158] International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?,* Africa Report N°92, 31 March 2005, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/west-africa/Islamist%20Terrorism%20in%20the%20Sahel%20Fact%20or%20Fiction.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[159] LeSage, *Evolving Threat.*

Tuareg and Hausa men sign in to receive medical care at a registration tent outside the medical clinic in Amaloul, Niger. (Photo courtesy of Peter Tinti, permission granted to the author)

As a program focused on countering the spread of terrorism and violent extremism in the region, TSCTP was not designed to prevent the succession of crises that Mali has suffered since early 2012.[160] Therefore, attributing TSCTP with the capacity to prevent state collapse in this environment misrepresents the scope and scale of the program.[161] Realistically, a program designed to address the region's structural challenges would have been on the scale of the Marshall Plan or Plan Colombia – with a broader scope that looked more like nation-building than TSCTP's narrow focus on CT/CVE. Such a program would have required a much larger U.S. government commitment across most of the ten TSCTP countries, which would have been unlikely due to U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the fact that the Sahel was not at the forefront of U.S. national security concerns. In reality, by focusing on CT/CVE, TSCTP activities worked at the margins of state weakness – a narrow focus that aligned with the

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[160] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013; interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[161] Interview with former official from USAID Africa Bureau, Washington, DC, March 21, 2013.

vital, albeit limited, U.S. national security interest to counter AQIM.[162]

TSCTP also carried an unrealistic expectation that instead of training small units of CT forces, the United States was engaged in an effort akin to the security sector reform (SSR) of regional militaries.[163] In fact, many TSCTP stakeholders believed that SSR was necessary but unlikely, due to resource constraints – and that therefore CT capacity-building was the best and most affordable option.[164] The intent behind training small CT units was for a small investment driven by resource constraints to have a large, and thereby disproportionate, effect. Indeed, half of Chad's U.S.-trained Special Anti-Terrorism Group deployed to Mali in early 2013 and was instrumental in clearing northern Mali of VEOs.[165] Regardless, this small-unit tactical training does not pretend to reform and professionalize the entire military, since it touches a small segment of the partner nation military.[166] Realistically, small rapid-reaction forces would not be capable of handling security for entire countries.[167]

In the aftermath of the coup in Mali, DoD began to articulate its concerns about having overly tactical and technical training and not having a sufficient focus on "values, ethics and military

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[162]White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,* June 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_st rategy.pdf. Accessed January 27, 2014; interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[163] JCOA, *Mali.*

[164] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau for African Affairs, Washington, DC, March 25, 2013; interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

[165] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[166] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; interviews with U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL, March 13-14, 2013.

[167] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

ethos."[168] In hindsight, DoD realized that the type of training offered would have been more beneficial in countries with a basic institutional foundation, as the inability of a partner nation's defense institutions to maintain and sustain SOF units minimized the impact of such training.[169] As one interviewee aptly observed, "How can you have a military that succeeds if you don't have a government that succeeds?" – highlighting the broader institutional weaknesses within these states.[170]

Although TSCTP's military, law enforcement, and justice sector engagements have a capacity-building aspect to them, the program as a whole is lagging on building the capacity of civilian government institutions in the categories of public diplomacy, community engagement, and vocational training. A notable exception to this is in Mauritania, where USAID entered into a Limited Scope Grant Agreement with the partner nation's government due to its reluctance to be part of PDEVII with Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger, where the program is administered through NGOs. Through this arrangement, a Mauritanian government agency, the National Training Vocational Institute (INAP), is responsible for executing a vocational training program and is subsequently reimbursed by USAID. Although INAP is an exception to the rule in terms of the level of extant civilian government capacity in Mauritania, it is certainly a step in the right direction in terms of shifting ownership of the program to the partner nation and focusing on developing some level of government capacity.[171]

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[168] Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., "AFRICOM Commander Addresses Concerns, Potential Solutions in Mali," American Forces Press Service, January 24, 2013, http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119103 (accessed January 27, 2014).

[169] JCOA, *Mali;* interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013; interviews with U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL, March 13-14, 2013.

[170] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[171] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

Coordination with International Partners

There has been a proliferation of non-U.S. Sahel-Maghreb strategies that provide opportunities for greater coordination with TSCTP engagement.[172] In 2011, the European Union developed a *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*, which focuses on three core Sahelian states (Mauritania, Mali, and Niger) and has strategic lines of action that include development, good governance, internal conflict resolution, strengthening rule of law, and preventing violent extremism and radicalization, particularly among vulnerable youth.[173] In addition, the EU has three capacity-building missions in the Sahel and Maghreb: EUCAP Sahel Niger, which is a civilian mission to help the Nigerien authorities strengthen their framework for combating terrorism and organized crime;[174] the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM), which aims to support the rebuilding of the Malian armed forces and to meet their operational needs;[175] and, for the possibility that TSCTP will eventually expand to include Libya, the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM), which assists Libyan authorities in strengthening land, air, and maritime borders.[176]

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[172] Interview with USAID Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, December 17, 2013.

[173] European Union, *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[174] Factsheet on EUCAP Sahel Niger, last modified October 2013,

http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eucap-sahel-niger/pdf/factsheet_eucap_sahel_niger_en.pdf.

[175] Factsheet on EUTM-Mali, last modified September 2013, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eutm-mali/pdf/01092013_factsheet_eutm-mali_en.pdf.

[176] Factsheet on EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya, last modified October 2013, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eubam-libya/pdf/factsheet_eubam_libya_en.pdf.

General François Lecointre, commander of the European Union Training Mission in Mali, meets with Malian soldiers in Koulikoro, Mali (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

In 2013, the United Nations developed an Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which has three strategic goals: enhance inclusive and effective governance throughout the region; ensure that national and regional security mechanisms are capable of addressing cross-border threats, and integrate humanitarian and development plans and intervention to build long-term resilience.[177] In 2013, ECOWAS drafted a Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, which has the following objectives: enhance coordination among member states particularly in the fields of intelligence, law enforcement, investigation and the prosecution of terrorist crimes; strengthen national and regional capacities to detect, deter, intercept, and prevent terrorist crimes; promote a criminal justice approach that emphasizes the rule of law, due process, respect for human rights and the protection of civilians in counter-terrorism activities; prevent and combat violent religious radicalism/extremism; harmonize responses to terrorism including counterterrorism legislations; and promote

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[177] United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sahel region,* 14 June 2013, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2013/2013-09-20_SG_Report_Sahel_EN.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

regional and international cooperation on terrorism related matters including extradition and mutual legal assistance.[178]

Shared Threat Perspective and Counterterrorism Training

Across the TSCTP operating area, partner nations differ in their receptiveness to U.S. engagement on counterterrorism and counter violent extremism.[179] This is often a function of whether a particular country shares a compatible view with the United States on the terrorist threats in the region. For example, Senegal does not perceive CT and CVE as a priority due to the relatively low terrorist threat to the country and the fact that resolving the internal conflict in the Casamançe is a higher priority.[180] In contrast, some countries feel more vulnerable to terrorism and have been focused on preventing major attacks in their countries, such as bombings in Casablanca in 2003 and Marrakech in 2011; an attempt by a Nigerian national to blow up a U.S. passenger jet in December 2009; dual car bombings in Abuja in October 2010; and suicide bomb attacks against the French Embassy in Mauritania in 2009 and against a Mauritanian military base in August 2010.[181]

Regardless of individual country threat perceptions, the neighborhood in which TSCTP countries reside is, as a whole, one that faces many security challenges, including:

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[178] ECOWAS, *Draft Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, 2013.*

[179] Lianne Kennedy Boudali, *The Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership* (West Point: The Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, April 2007), http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA466542 (accessed January 27, 2014).

[180] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[181] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011; *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Nigeria,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mauritania,* submitted May 16, 2011.

- Violent extremist organizations such as AQIM, Ansar al-Dine, MUJAO Boko Haram, Ansaru, Ansar al-Sharia, and the al-Mulathamun Battalion[182]

- Spillover from conflicts in Libya, Mali, Sudan, and northern Nigeria[183]

- The influx of tens of thousands of returnees, mainly young Tuareg men, fleeing the violence in Libya in 2011 and complicating relations with the Tuareg communities in Mali and Niger[184]

- Concerns about foreign fighters returning from Mali and Syria[185]

- Collaboration between terrorist organizations and traffickers using traditional trade routes across the Sahara, or using licit networks in the region for financial and transportation logistics[186]

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[182] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[183] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Chad,* submitted May 16, 2011; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[184] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[185] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013.

[186] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Chad,* submitted May 16, 2011; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

- Underemployed, uneducated, and alienated youths being susceptible to criminal activities or extremist ideologies[187]

- Blowback from regional countries' troop contributions to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)[188]

- Retribution for the government of Mauritania's aggressive counterterrorism posture.[189]

Yet despite these threats across the TSCTP operating area, DoD stakeholders reported difficulties in getting partner nation CT units designated and certified as operational.[190] One challenge for TSCTP has been that the weakest and most vulnerable countries in the region, such as Mali, were at the center of the program's efforts by necessity. In addition, coups in Mauritania and Niger disrupted U.S. engagement in these countries, limited the long-term progress of U.S. government programs, and placed an artificial focus on Mali.[191] Consequently, this created a tendency for countries such as Mali to receive TSCTP funding regardless of whether it took U.S. priorities seriously.[192]

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[187] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Niger,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011; interview with U.S. Embassy in Algiers, Algeria, June 25-27, 2013.

[188] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[189] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mauritania,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[190] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[191] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[192] Interview with Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, April 4, 2013.

A centerpiece of the military capacity-building component of TSCTP was having partner nations identify and develop elite and highly capable units dedicated to the CT mission. Yet, there appeared to be few consequences for partner nations not adhering to prior agreements to designate an elite CT unit for training and ensure that it remained intact. In some cases, U.S. training failed to gain traction as a result of high personnel turnover in units or units failing to "graduate" from training or not being employed to counter the terrorist threat.[193] In many cases, DoD believed it had no leverage over how these elite units were employed, as partner nation governments had offered the U.S. the opportunity to work with specific units.[194] For example, in Mali, the U.S.-trained Echelon Tactique Inter-Armée (ETIA)[195] would stay together for six months of training and then break apart, before troops would return to their original units.[196] In addition, Mali had long been reticent to address the growing terrorist threat in the north by directly confronting AQIM, allegedly because of fears of upsetting the fragile ethno-political détente in the north and of provoking AQIM attacks in the south.[197] Moreover, when the Tuareg rebellion broke out in the north in early 2012, the Malian

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[193] JCOA, *Mali;* LeSage, *Evolving Threat;* interview with U.S. Africa Command, May 2, 2013.

[194] Interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

[195] In addition to the ETIAs, the 33rd Parachute Regiment was another elite unit that received U.S. military training as part of TSCTP. The leader of the March 2012 coup, then-Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, was not trained as part of TSCTP, but did participate in several iterations of U.S. training, including basic infantry officer training at Fort Benning, English-language training through the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base, an intelligence course at Fort Huachuca, and study at the Marine Corps Base Quantico. Walter Pincus, "Mali insurgency followed 10 years of U.S. counterterrorism programs," *Washington Post,* January 16, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/mali-insurgency-followed-10-years-of-us-counterterrorism-programs/2013/01/16/a43f2d32-601e-11e2-a389-ee565c81c565_story.html (accessed February 11, 2014).

[196] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[197] Arieff and Johnson, *Crisis in Mali.*

Armed Forces were ill prepared to confront it, as President Touré allegedly feared a coup, and thus kept military units underequipped.[198]

In Nigeria, U.S. SOF used to train the 72nd Counterterrorism Battalion, but a decision was made to disengage from this unit due to the Nigerian military's unwillingness to maintain it as an elite, cohesive counterterrorism unit.[199] This decision, which was supported by many U.S. government stakeholders, such as the Ambassador at the time, JSOTF-TS, and SOFLE, was made because training the 72nd was not achieving its intended effects.[200] Despite this decision to cease training the 72nd, the U.S. was able to maintain some SOF contact with Nigerian military units. Specifically, the Special Boat Service (SBS) sought SOF skills and capabilities to address insecurity in the Niger Delta region, and was willing to engage with the U.S. military, allowing a degree of continuity, contact with, and training by U.S. forces.

In Senegal, U.S. SOF faced multiple hurdles in getting the Senegalese military to allow their designated CT unit to conduct an exercise to demonstrate their capabilities in the SOF mission set so that it could progress to more advanced U.S. training.[201] There seemed to be a lack of political will within the Senegalese military to properly resource the CT company because it is relatively new and does not have a senior officer advocating for resources. In fact, while the SOFLE reported the CT company to be highly capable and keen to continue training, the Senegalese O-6 in charge of the company was apparently unable to articulate why it was necessary for Senegal to have a CT capability in the first place.[202] As a result, this CT company frequently ends up at the end of the queue for resources, making it nearly impossible for the unit to obtain the resources needed to accomplish a special

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[198] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[199] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[200] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[201] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[202] Interview with Senegalese colonel in command of U.S.-trained counterterrorism company, Thiès, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

forces mission.[203] There are concerns among U.S. trainers that the CT unit will perpetually be in the training cycle and will never be certified as operational.[204]

In contrast, in countries such as Burkina Faso and Mauritania, partner nation counterterrorism units that were designated for U.S. training were kept intact and employed in counterterrorism operations.[205] In the case of Mauritania specifically, DoD has been successful in moving partner nation CT forces from Section 1206-funded training to Section 1208-funded, SOF-specific training that would give them more advanced capabilities. A concrete example of the growing capabilities of these forces was in August 2010 and February 2011, when Mauritanian security forces successfully intercepted AQIM vehicle-borne explosives in Nema and Nouakchott, respectively.[206] The only times in which individuals are pulled from training cycles in Mauritania are for real-world operations, such as along the common border with Mali.[207]

In some cases, there may be a question of whether governments that received military capacity-building as part of TSCTP exaggerated their vulnerability to terrorism in order to gain assistance that could make units more capable of quelling domestic political opposition.[208] Conversely, in some countries, counterterrorism training and the employment of partner nation security forces was constrained by the leaders' fears of creating a coup-making force. As a result, in some countries, SOF was only allowed to train "trusted" units or regime protection forces. It is unclear whether U.S. involvement in training these forces was to

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[203] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[206] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mauritania,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[207] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[208] Boudali, *Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership;* International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel.*

gain entry to train more appropriate forces or because these were the only options on the table. In Burkina Faso, SOF could only train designated units – the Presidential Guard and the 25th Parachute Regiment, which demonstrated loyalty to President Blaise Campaoré during the 2011 protests and military mutinies.[209] Since this bout of instability, all security force weapons (with the exception of those held by the Presidential Guard and the gendarmerie) have to be checked out of an armory in Bobo-Dioulasso, and soldiers from the Presidential Guard supervise other security forces to ensure that weapons are used properly.[210] In Chad, the U.S. trained the Special Anti-Terrorism Group (SATG), which was deployed to Mali in support of the French *Opération Serval* in the winter and spring of 2013. Prior to deployment, the SATG was highly capable, but as President Idriss Déby feared a coup, they were not given logistics support capability.[211]

Regional Cooperation among Partner Nations

A major obstacle with TSCTP has been mistrust among regional partners, which has hampered efforts to convince countries such as Mali, Mauritania, Algeria, and Niger to increase cooperation against AQIM. As AQIM increasingly began to operate in northern Mali, some regional states became concerned that the Malian government allegedly had a gentlemen's agreement with AQIM, whereby the group had free rein to operate so long as it cut the government in on revenues from illicit trafficking and refrained from launching attacks in Bamako. In a related fashion, there were also allegations of leaks within Mali's security and intelligence services that alerted AQIM to imminent Malian-Mauritanian operations in the Ouagadou forest along their common border.[212] Mali's neighbors warned the government of the dangers of allowing AQIM to operate, to which former Malian

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[209] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[212] International Crisis Group, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation.*

President Amadou Toumani Touré reportedly stated "How can I be the weak link in a broken chain?"[213] To restate, how could Mali be the weak link in a regional security environment in which countries failed to work together? As a result, coordinated regional security cooperation to counter AQIM in the Sahel has been limited.[214]

Even when countries do agree to work together, it may not result in greater capabilities. The Joint Operational General Staff Committee (CEMOC) in Tamanrasset, southern Algeria, established in 2010 by Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, sought to facilitate a harmonized regional approach to AQIM and encourage closer communication and collaboration.[215] Yet, despite being staffed by combined military personnel, the military command center "plays no significant role in regional counterterrorism activity and is unlikely to carry out counterterrorism military operations for the foreseeable future."[216]

Part of the challenge is that there is a significant difference in the internal security capacity of North African states when compared to the Sahelian states, as the military, police, and judicial institutions of the Maghreb are much more developed and professionalized than those of Sahelian states.[217] Another impediment to regional integration and collaboration is the 40-

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[213] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[214] LeSage, *Evolving Threat.*

[215] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Mali,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[216] General David M. Rodriguez, U.S. Army Nominee for Commander, U.S. Africa Command, Advance Policy Questions for Confirmation Hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, February 14, 2013, http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Rodriguez%2002-14-13.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[217] Boudali, Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

year conflict between Morocco and Algeria over the status of Western Sahara, which is the prism through which Morocco views its foreign affairs, and through which Algeria views all Moroccan actions.[218] Although Morocco seeks to be more regionally engaged, the cold war with Algeria prevents it from tapping into regional programs.[219] In fact, arguing that Sahelian security issues do not concern Morocco, Algeria has refrained from inviting Morocco to participate in regional counterterrorism efforts.[220] As a result of these challenges, security cooperation more often takes the form of regional workshops and training than combined military activities.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, some regional cooperation across TSCTP countries does occur. Examples include:

- The annual multinational exercise Flintlock took place in Mauritania in 2013, with the participation of 1,100 people from 19 countries.[221] During Flintlock, Mauritanian ACMs trained 210 soldiers from African partner nations on civil-military operations while CMSE stood by as advisors. [222] During Flintlock 2014, which was held in Niger, ACMs from Mauritania had planned to conduct training on civil-military affairs without U.S. supervision.[223]

- Algeria hosts the African Union's African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) in Algiers, and

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[218] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[219] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[220] Alexis Arieff, *Algeria: Current Issues,* Congressional Research Service, November 18, 2013, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21532.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

[221] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

has convened regional countries with the exception of Morocco in ministerial-level discussions of the threat posed by AQIM.[224]

- Moroccan police, gendarmes, and customs officials provide training and investigative assistance to their counterparts throughout West Africa.[225]

- Mauritania sends military officers to Algeria and Morocco for training.[226]

- Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria have a Lake Chad Basin task force to address transnational threats in the tri-border region.[227]

- The RSO in Senegal is training other regional partners (Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Mauritania) to establish a cyberlab in Dakar.[228]

- There was supposed to be a border security initiative in Senegal, through which the RSO would give interoperable communications to gendarmes in Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.[229]

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[224] U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Algeria,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[225] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013; U.S. State Department, *FY2013 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, U.S. Mission to Morocco,* submitted May 16, 2011.

[226] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[227] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[228] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[229] Ibid.

A group of African officers in Dakar, Senegal, work together during a 12-week introductory intelligence course at the Gendarmerie Academy here. The Military Intelligence Basic Officer Course – Africa (MIBOCA), which provides training on the basic intelligence cycle, analytic processes, functional staff integration, and information-sharing in a multinational environment, was sponsored by U.S. Africa Command and supported by U.S. Marine Forces Africa (MARFORAF). The course was focused on equipping junior officers with the basic skills to operate a battalion-level military intelligence staff. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Marine Corps via Wikimedia Commons)

Compared to regional security cooperation, cooperation on justice sector counterterrorism capacity-building seems to have fewer barriers to entry.[230] As a result, there has been a greater regional push for cooperation within the justice sector.[231] This often takes the form of regional training on anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing facilitated by the RLAs in the region, which is abetted by the fact that the RLAs in the region have many countries in their portfolios.

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[230] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013.

[231] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

Disruptions in Engagement

Several factors have led to disruptions in security and development assistance to TSCTP countries, such as coups (Mauritania in 2008, Niger in 2010, and Mali in 2012); civil wars (Chad in 2008); and poor performance on budget transparency, trafficking in persons, child soldiers, and Leahy vetting.[232] Some of these disruptions meant that according to law, the United States was prohibited from providing non-humanitarian assistance to these countries – except on issues of maternal/child health and counterterrorism – without a presidential waiver.[233] With regard to coups, per Section 7008 of the Department of State Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act (SFOAA), no funds appropriated under Titles III-VI of the Act can be obligated to any country whose government has been deposed by a coup. Legally speaking, the United States can continue Title 10 (DoD) security force assistance in the aftermath of an unconstitutional change of government, but such assistance is sometimes suspended on policy grounds.[234]

Malian troops stand guard outside Kati Barracks in Bamako,

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[232] JCOA, *Mali.*

[233] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[234] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

then the headquarters of coup leader Captain Amadou Sanogo.
(Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons & Magharebia.com)

Under the Leahy Amendment, foreign military personnel receiving U.S. training must be vetted for past human rights abuses. Yet, Leahy vetting, while indispensable, has made engagement challenging with several TSCTP partner nations:

- In Chad, there have been Leahy vetting issues due to the role of the military in putting down the 2008 rebellion against President Déby.[235]

- In Nigeria, each unit of the military deploys personnel to Joint Task Force Operation Restore Order in Maiduguri, and as a result of widespread allegations of human rights abuses, they become tainted and thereby excluded from future U.S. training.[236] In fact, due to the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency and the continuation of said abuses, the ability of the United States to provide security force assistance to the Nigerian military has become more constrained.[237]

- Due to coups in 2005 and 2008 and human rights violations that occurred during the Mauritania–Senegal Border War (1989-1991), Leahy vetting has been a substantial challenge for engagement with partner nation military and law enforcement. Moreover, Mauritania's poor recordkeeping of prospective trainees' names and dates of birth delay Leahy vetting and even cause training engagements to get cancelled due to names not being able to get U.S. government approval in a timely manner.[238]

- Security force assistance to Mali was placed on hold as a result of the 2012 coup. As the United States reengages

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[235] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[236] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, June 18-21, 2013.

[237] Interview with U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

[238] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

with the democratically elected government, Leahy vetting for the security forces will be a challenge in terms of verifying what actions individuals may have taken during the coup, or whether they have been tainted by association with the perpetrators of the coup.[239]

Since the outset of TSCTP, these disruptions have had negative implications for the depth and continuity of military capacity-building. Every time there is a major disruption, such as a coup or civil war, engagement has to stop until the issue is resolved. Unfortunately, when the United States disengages, it loses influence, and the relationships and skills gained during training atrophy.[240] By the time assistance is reinitiated and funds are reprogrammed, it has lost several years of potential progress.

Limited Ability to Adapt to Changing Events

TSCTP was neither conceived nor appropriately resourced to prevent shocks in partner nations such as coups and state failure. However, the shocks that rippled across North Africa and the Sahel from 2011 on threatened to compromise the stability of TSCTP partner nations and U.S. efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the region. As the region's challenges are of a long-term, systemic nature, there may not be much that TSCTP engagement can do to adapt to shocks.[241] Consequently, there were few instances in which country teams were able to adapt TSCTP programming to address the changing security situation in the region in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening and the onset of the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali.

In the case of Mali, efforts to adapt were overtaken by rapidly unfolding events: the fall of Muamar al-Qadhafi in Libya in

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[239] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[240] Interviews with U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, FL, March 13-14, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, March 20, 2013; interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[241] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

October 2011, the influx of weapons from the Qadhafi regime stockpiles, and the initiation of the Tuareg rebellion in January 2012.[242] In addition, there were fears that if the United States helped the Malian Armed Forces too much, that counterterrorism assistance could be used against the Tuaregs, which would imply that the U.S. was taking sides in an internal conflict.[243]

In neighboring Niger, TSCTP programming shifted slightly, with the country team targeting Tuareg returnees from Libya with youth engagement/vocational training programs.[244] Over Mali's western border, Senegal increased cooperation with the United States on border security, due both to receiving funds reprogrammed from Mali and to the increased willingness for the Government of Senegal to engage on this issue. The security situation was deteriorating rapidly in Mali around the time that President Macky Sall took office, and he was said to be more willing to engage on the issue of border security than his predecessor, Abdoulaye Wade.[245] Mauritania and Burkina Faso also stepped up border security in response to the situation in Mali, with the latter dedicating a rapid-response counterterrorism company along its common border with Mali.[246]

Human Resource Capacity

The 2013 TSCTP strategy review calls for a dedicated full-time program manager with support staff, which could help remedy some of the human resource gaps to facilitate program oversight, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation at the headquarters level.[247] Yet such human resource constraints at the level of the

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[242] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali, May 6-10, 2013.

[243] Interview with U.S. Special Operations Command, Africa, Stuttgart, Germany, May 2, 2013.

[244] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Niamey, Niger, April 23-26, 2013.

[245] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[246] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013; interview with U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, September 9-10, 2013.

[247] *TSCTP Review.*

country teams have limited the scale of possible TSCTP engagement.[248] Many country teams appeared at or above capacity in terms of executing U.S. government programs – including TSCTP.[249] In some cases, additional funding for TSCTP projects was forthcoming, but the Embassy had to turn it away because it did not have the personnel to administer, monitor, and evaluate the program.[250] In other cases, country team personnel had no shortage of ideas for TSCTP projects, but did not have the time to write proposals to secure funding because of the shortage of personnel.[251] In fact, in the smaller Embassies, such as the one in Chad, positions in some sections are staffed only one or two people deep.[252]

Some Embassies fill this personnel void by relying on MIST to support the Public Affairs section and CMSE to carry out MEDCAPs and VETCAPs that may overlap with USAID development objectives. This adaptation mechanism reflects the findings of an August 2009 State Inspector General report that concluded that U.S. Embassies in Africa were understaffed, and that the void created by a lack of Embassy resources for traditional development and public diplomacy was being filled by the Department of Defense.[253] On country teams in TSCTP countries, it is unclear whether these instances of interagency cooperation occur because the agencies have overlapping missions, or because DoD is the only agency in-country with the human resources to supplement country team positions. In any event, while TSCTP can function on a day-to-day basis with

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[248] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[249] Multiple author interviews across the interagency between March and September 2013.

[250] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, August 25-27, 2013.

[251] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, May 14-17, 2013.

[252] Interview with U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad, April 29-30, 2013.

[253] United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector, *General Report of Inspection: The Bureau of African Affairs,* Report Number ISP-I-09-63, August 2009, http://oig.state.gov/documents/organization/127270.pdf (accessed January 27, 2014).

shortfalls in human resource capacity, the lack of surge capacity in a region where crises develop and need immediate attention is a major limitation.

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Conclusions

The programs and activities documented above that are part of the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership represent some of the U.S. government's efforts to address threats and vulnerabilities in the Maghreb and the Sahel. By U.S. government standards, TSCTP is on the cutting edge for its ability to implement a regional program.[254] TSCTP stakeholders can point to some indications of success – although they may be the result of correlation rather than causation. Chad and Niger have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the United States, and Chad in particular has demonstrated its willingness to operate across borders to counter VEOs, as evidenced by the SATG deployment to Mali in 2013. Mauritania has demonstrated its ability to "Find, Fix, and Finish" VEOs by employing the counterterrorism capabilities that TSCTP engagement has helped them build, such as intercepting vehicle-borne explosives in Nema and Nouakchott in 2010 and 2011, and using its Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability to direct its ground troops to confront AQIM elements.[255] The case of Burkina Faso demonstrates the ability of the country team to link non-TSCTP and TSCTP engagement by using alumni of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs exchange programs as proxies for the Peace Corps program in the Sahel region of that country, and subsequently as locally hired USAID staff for the implementation of PDEVII. Although TSCTP was limited in its ability to adapt to the changing security environment in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening and the crises in Mali, Tuareg returnees from Libya were targeted by the

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[254] Annual TSCTP Conference, 2013.

[255] Interview with former State Department Bureau for African Affairs official, Washington, DC, November 13, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Washington, DC, November 18, 2013; interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, November 26, 2013.

country team for youth engagement/vocational training programs in Niger. In addition, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal were able to bolster their border security.

In spite of these successes, like many U.S. government foreign assistance programs, TSCTP has had its share of implementation challenges, many of which – bureaucratic impasses, regional animosities, disruptions in engagement, lack of partner nation willingness – cannot be resolved in the near term. Some of the planning and implementation challenges raised in this report were salient in the interagency TSCTP strategy review in 2013, and may also be addressed during the U.S. government's implementation of the revised TSCTP strategy. Previous disagreements over the wording of the TSCTP strategy appear to have been overcome by higher-level U.S. government attention on the Sahel-Maghreb regions and a revision of the TSCTP strategy following the Arab Awakening and the crises in Mali. The creation of an interagency Deputy Assistant Secretary-level Oversight Committee may facilitate higher-level attention on, and coordination within, the program, and provide mechanisms to adjudicate disputes among interagency stakeholders, such as the issue of permissions for DoD activity in TSCTP countries. Per the draft 2013 TSCTP strategy, should TSCTP acquire the dedicated program manager, support staff, and operational support fund, and an additional Regional Counterterrorism Coordinator position at one of the embassies in the Sahel, this may be able to improve program coordination.

Even with the improved coordination that could result from dedicated program staff, TSCTP will still require improved field-based regional coordination. TSCTP stakeholders should prioritize field-based regional coordination and clearly articulate which agencies and individuals should be responsible for coordinating TSCTP activities across agencies, bureaucracies, and country teams. Seeing as there are regional and functional seams within every bureaucracy involved in the program, regional coordination needs to occur at the headquarters and the mission levels, requiring an increased commitment from the country team, the AFRICOM Regional Engagement Divisions, the Regional Counterterrorism Coordinator(s), and the members of

the Standing Interagency Working Group, to prioritize field-based regional coordination across TSCTP countries.

A real-time Common Operating Picture could go a long way towards improving field-based regional coordination. An unclassified password-protected web portal to which all U.S. government TSCTP stakeholders had access, and into which all stakeholders would be required to enter data on TSCTP engagement, could increase situational awareness on how various components of the program are moving towards achieving TSCTP objectives. This portal would provide a system for tracking TSCTP proposals, monitoring and evaluating TSCTP activities, and documenting best practices and lessons learned in order to build a base of institutional interagency knowledge of the program, and create opportunities for interagency and regional collaboration across the spectrum of TSCTP activities. However, this information-sharing mechanism may only be possible if TSCTP can acquire an operational support fund to cover the expense of creating and maintaining this system.

While TSCTP is instrumental in bringing the "3Ds" together in a regional approach to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel and Maghreb, it lacks the scope and scale to address the many structural problems in the region that enable terrorist activity. The 2013 TSCTP strategy review recognized that the program needs to create synergies with complementary U.S. government efforts in the region in order to address the underlying issues that inhibit the effectiveness of TSCTP's CT/CVE activities. The example provided by the country team in Burkina Faso – using alumni from the State Department's non-TSCTP exchange programs to work in the functional areas of USAID's community engagement and vocational training as part of TSCTP – could be instructive for future attempts to magnify the impact of TSCTP engagement.

Given TSCTP's limited CT/CVE focus, it would be beneficial to increase the coordination of program activities with the complementary efforts of other bilateral and multilateral donors. The 2013 TSCTP strategy review recognized a need to leverage opportunities for coordination with a variety of non-U.S. initiatives in the region, such as the United Nations' *Integrated*

Strategy for the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States' *Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan*, and the European Union's *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*. The SIWG has been tapped with the lead for managing international partner coordination, and is in discussions with France and the UK, which have longstanding relationships with the countries in the region due to their colonial ties, to identify gaps in order to inform future assistance.[256] TSCTP stakeholders are also considering utilizing the Global Counterterrorism Forum as a mechanism to improve multilateral donor coordination, help identify priorities, mobilize resources, and identify the necessary expertise to address needs in the region.[257]

Even though some security cooperation takes place on a regional level, it must still overcome regional tensions over the status of Western Sahara or allegations of government complicity with terrorist or criminal elements. In the near term, increasing the regionalization of capacity-building efforts, which sometimes occurs within the justice, military, and law enforcement components of TSCTP, may be more effective at building trust and sharing best practices than at intelligence-sharing or combined operations. However, efforts to increase regional training sessions might require the program to acquire additional staffing and funding, due to the logistics of gathering participants from across the region.[258]

As part of the implementation of the revised TSCTP strategy, the SIWG is currently in the process of developing a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the outcomes of TSCTP activities, determine progress, and identify areas for

[256] Interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013.

[257] *Draft TSCTP Guiding Strategy;* interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, November 6, 2013.

[258] Interview with State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Washington, DC, November 18, 2013; interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 20, 2013.

improvement.[259] As part of the program's monitoring and evaluation initiatives moving forward, TSCTP stakeholders should also develop a system of "end-use monitoring" on assistance so that there is a database to track the performance of the military personnel and elite CT units that the United States has trained as part of TSCTP.[260] Clearly, the United States cannot dictate what a country does or does not decide to do with the assistance granted it. Yet, rather than accepting lack of leverage for U.S. government assistance as a cost of doing business, TSCTP stakeholders should attach conditions to assistance, making past performance drive future engagement. If the purpose of training a partner nation's security forces is increased capabilities rather than presence alone, DoD should explore engagement with other security forces if there is evidence that the partner nation is not maintaining a cohesive partner nation CT unit and employing it to counter terrorist threats. If the partner nation does not designate a CT unit, identify its mission, and place it under the command of a senior officer, training may be less likely to have traction.

Although TSCTP as a whole is a capacity-building program, more TSCTP programs in the public diplomacy, community engagement, and vocational training functional categories should have a capacity-building aspect to them so that civilian capacity-building can keep pace with the program's security force capacity-building. Therefore, TSCTP stakeholders should explore additional mechanisms for supporting the development of partner nation civilian government capacity in these functional areas of engagement. Rather than distributing aid, this would be a proactive attempt to encourage government ownership and remedy the program's insufficient focus on building the capacity of government institutions. As a salient example, the Limited Scope Grant Agreement with the Government of Mauritania may be no more than a confidence-building measure,[261] but it at least

[259] *TSCTP Review;* interview with State Department Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, November 8, 2013.

[260] Interview with OSD-Policy/African Affairs, Arlington, VA, March 20, 2013.

[261] Interview with USAID Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, December 17, 2013.

demonstrates an intention, lacking elsewhere in TSCTP, to build civilian government capacity outside of the security sector.

Finally, to strengthen the Embassy platform for TSCTP implementation, non-DoD TSCTP stakeholders should attain the human resource capacity necessary to balance out the execution of U.S. government programs. While DoD can "surge" personnel in the form of SOFLE, MIST, and CMSE to support program implementation, non-DoD agencies should also possess that rotational capacity to supplement the roles filled by USAID, the Public Affairs Section, and the Political Section. Notably, TSCTP is not a crisis response program,[262] but the program should explore whether there is a way to tap into civilian surge capacities outside of emergency situations.[263] Theoretically, short-term personnel could be sourced from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), if these bureaus are willing and capable of supporting short-term (three- to four-month) TSCTP needs. Moreover, as there were limited means by which TSCTP stakeholder could adapt to the changing security environment, there should be the appropriate funding authorities and human resources to allow agencies and the country teams to be more responsive to shocks in the region. In order to minimize the bandwidth constraint on the country team, it would help if TSCTP funding was more flexible and streamlined, and if there were fewer restrictions on what it could and could not be used for.[264]

In the words of a former senior State Department official, "the best offense against terrorism is in preventative development and political solutions, not in the projection of military power."[265] As it currently stands, TSCTP provides both military and non-military

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[262] Interview with State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism, Washington, DC, November 6, 2013.

[263] Interview with USAID Bureau of African Affairs, Washington, DC, December 17, 2013.

[264] Interview with U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, June 10-12, 2013.

[265] Interview with former State Department Bureau for African Affairs official, Washington, DC, November 13, 2013.

approaches to the region's challenges, and is a means by which to maintain the United States' indirect, or "by, with, and through," approach to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the region. Therefore, despite its planning and implementation challenges, TSCTP provides a base that can be learned from and improved upon in future iterations of the program.

Recommendations to address TSCTP planning and implementation challenges

1. Develop a web-based real-time Common Operating Picture managed by the Standing Interagency Working Group (SIWG), with mandatory inputs from TSCTP stakeholders.

2. Designate in-country program points of contact whose duty is to facilitate field-based regional coordination across TSCTP agencies, stakeholders, and country teams.

3. Increase the use of regional–vice bilateral–training across TSCTP partner nations as a long-term confidence-building measure to help counteract intra-regional mistrust.

4. Establish clear guidelines for "end-use monitoring" of U.S. government assistance and identify conditions under which assistance should be adjusted or terminated.

5. Develop more extensive partner nation capacity-building components within the public diplomacy, community engagement, and vocational training categories of TSCTP engagement so that civilian capacity-building can keep pace with the program's security force capacity-building.

6. Identify opportunities within TSCTP so that U.S. government stakeholders can flexibly accentuate positive, or mitigate negative, developments in the region that are relevant to TSCTP objectives. This should include remedying the lack of "surge" capacity within civilian U.S. government agencies.

7. Identify opportunities for TSCTP engagement to leverage broader U.S. government assistance that is relevant to TSCTP objectives, as well as the CT/CVE and non-CT/CVE

capacity-building efforts of TSCTP partner nations and other bilateral & multilateral partners.

About the Author

Lesley Anne Warner is an Africa analyst at the CNA Corporation, where she provides analytic support to the U.S. government on U.S. military engagement in Africa, dynamics of armed conflict, and post-conflict military integration. She completed this study while on assignment at the Center for Complex Operations at National Defense University between October 2012 and January 2014. Ms. Warner's research has also been published in *PRISM*, the *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, the *Naval War College Review*, *World Politics Review*, *African Arguments*, *The Atlantic*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Journal of International Peace Operations*.

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