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Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (2014-2020)Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

The Department of Defense (DoD) sponsors strategic evaluations of security cooperation (SC) programs and activities pursuant to Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 383 and DoD Instruction 5132.14, "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise." The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships (ODASD(GP)) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) initiated a strategic evaluation to measure the effects and implications of Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) initiatives implemented by the DoD SC Enterprise.

DoD commissioned the National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) of the RAND Corporation, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center, to conduct this strategic evaluation of DoD CTR Program efforts, which investigated the DoD CTR Program in four countries across three Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). The evaluation, "A Strategic Evaluation of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program," included DoD CTR Program activities conducted from 2014 to 2020. This summary, developed by ODASD(GP), provides unclassified primary findings and recommendations derived from RAND's evaluation report.

The evaluation was designed to answer three questions:

1. To what extent has the DoD CTR Program supported threat reduction objectives?
2. To what extent have DoD CTR Program activities resulted in SC-like effects?
3. To what extent is the DoD CTR Program effectively planned, resourced, and implemented?

Methodology: DoD selected four case study countries to ensure the evaluation included country case studies that (1) had at least two active DoD CTR Program component programs, (2) represented multiple GCCs, (3) included both legacy and new engagement countries to reflect the diversity in the maturity and complexity of engagements, and (4) took into account stakeholder priorities. Categories of activities cover all DoD CTR Program component programs, including the Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), the Proliferation Prevention Program (PPP), the Global Nuclear Security (GNS) program, the Chemical Security Elimination (CSE) program, and the Strategic Offensive Arms Elimination (SOAE) program.

RAND performed the evaluation using a mixed-methods comparative case study approach consisting of stakeholder interviews, site visits, budget analyses, analysis of various DoD CTR Program reports and policy and guidance memoranda, and a literature review. Prior to reforms set forth by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 2017, DoD did not have a comprehensive program of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation for SC programs and activities to measure progress toward strategic objectives; thus, RAND reconstructed design frameworks and objective trees at the country level that link DoD CTR Program activities to high-level strategic objectives. Due to the retrospective nature of this evaluation, RAND derived the structure of the high-level threat reduction goals from 2013 Strategic Guidance. DoD released a new National Defense Strategy (NDS) in 2018 focused on great power competition.

The evaluation team used a modified institutional histories approach to understand the historical context of the DoD CTR Program, assess beneficiary perceptions of DoD CTR programming and U.S. contributions to threat reduction over the study period, and determine causal links between

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DoD CTR programming and positive or negative effects on host country capabilities to effectively and efficiently reduce the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The evaluation used primarily qualitative data collection to put into context program efforts and perception of SC-like effects to analyze how the DoD CTR Program contributed to achievement of strategic objectives. After fieldwork in each of the case study countries, RAND analyzed its data to produce findings and recommendations.

RAND derived three strategic objectives of DoD CTR programs from various sources for the 2014-2020 evaluation period: 1) reduce the threat from weapons of mass destruction and related materials, technologies, facilities, and expertise; 2) account for/secure/safeguard/destroy WMD-related materials; and 3) protect from, detect, and interdict proliferation of WMD-related threats. This evaluation analyzed progress toward these three strategic objectives.

CTR Program-Level Insights: RAND identified four insights regarding the DoD CTR Program at the program level. Insights include: (1) The DoD CTR Program's authorities are unique and provide a degree of flexibility not shared by SC programs; (2) The DoD CTR Program operates alongside large SC programs and other countering weapons of mass destruction (CWMD) programs to achieve strategic effects; (3) Coordination between the DoD CTR Program and the GCCs regarding theater plans, priorities, and activities could be strengthened; and (4) Discrepancies between stakeholders regarding inputs to the DoD CTR Program policy prioritization process create tension and constrain effective implementation.

Key Findings and Recommendations: After collecting data on the DoD CTR Program outputs and outcomes tied to the identified strategic objectives, RAND used empirical evidence to put into context program efforts and perceptions of SC-like effects to make causal statements about how the DoD CTR Program contributed to achievement of strategic objectives. A summary of RAND's key findings and recommendations, organized by evaluation question, is below.

To what extent has CTR supported threat reduction objectives?

Finding: The DoD CTR Program is well-positioned to respond quickly to emerging WMD threats; its authorities are unique and fill an existing gap.

- **Recommendation:** CTR's authorities should remain distinct but ensure that the CTR program enhances its collaboration with DoD's SC community.

Finding: The DoD CTR Program enabled some partner countries to be regional leaders and helped to improve collaboration and coordination more broadly with regional organizations.

- **Recommendation:** Continue to encourage partners to take on leadership roles in areas where they have clear strengths, facilitate the development and strengthening of regional networks, and facilitate dialogue through regional fora where countries can share lessons learned and best practices.

Finding: The DoD CTR Program support for COVID-19 preparedness and response has been broad and multifaceted. DoD CTR Program efforts are bearing fruit in a real-world crisis.

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- **Recommendation:** To capitalize on BTRP's and PPP's successes in facilitating partner countries' responses to biological incidents, DoD should incentivize partners to prioritize building and sustaining biosurveillance (BSV), biosecurity, and biosafety capabilities.

Finding: The COVID-19 pandemic created disruptions to planned DoD CTR Program events, leaving many efforts unfinished and potentially requiring retraining to fill emerging gaps. Some DoD CTR Program activities continued on virtual platforms, and partners continue to express interest in such opportunities.

- **Recommendation:** Though a few select activities continued virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, consider developing a broader set of new innovative approaches to training and incorporate these approaches into country-level plans to help manage long-term disruptions.

Findings: The DoD CTR Program enterprise collaborates closely, but integration of the threat reduction mission with the broader SC enterprise could be improved. DoD CTR Program stakeholders are not always fully aware of how decisions are made about partner selection and prioritization.

- **Recommendation:** Maintain the DoD CTR Program's threat reduction authority and mission while encouraging systematic collaboration and information-sharing between DoD's CTR Program and SC communities, as well as other, related U.S. Government departments and agencies, to improve the ability of each to leverage the other's knowledge and expertise and strengthen coordination, deconfliction, and identification of seams.
- **Recommendation:** Expand information-sharing and threat assessment across stakeholders and work towards an inclusive and transparent decision-making process across the DoD CTR Program enterprise.

Finding: DoD CTR Program component programs have successfully sought out and developed partnerships with functionally similar programs across the U.S. Government and internationally to address WMD threats, but these partnerships could be better leveraged.

- **Recommendation:** Given its wide-ranging enlistment of non-DTRA U.S. and international sources of expertise, funding, and coordination, the DoD CTR Program should systematically assess these partnerships to elicit lessons and best practices as well as to identify partnerships that could be strengthened.

Finding: Where the DoD CTR Program operates alongside other U.S. departments and agencies and with allied CWMD programs and activities, attributing strategic effects to specific programs can be challenging as the DoD CTR Program and the other programs are driving toward the same results; moreover, the effects can be amplified when efforts are combined.

- **Recommendation:** Develop metrics and drive data collection to link component program inputs and outputs to qualitative and quantitative measures of component program effectiveness for achieving threat reduction objectives and further develop measures of outcome that tie individual and cross-component efforts specifically to strategic competition and other key NDS objectives.

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To what extent have CTR activities resulted in SC-like effects?

Finding: The DoD CTR Program enables deep partner-country civilian and military relationships, facilitates partner country interagency coordination, and strengthens U.S. cooperation with partner nations. During the evaluation period, the DoD CTR Program supported NDS objectives, but processes for tracking how DoD CTR Program activities support threat reduction, strategic competition, and other NDS objectives could be strengthened.

- **Recommendation:** The DoD CTR Program enterprise should systematically track and advocate for its role in building relationships with partner countries, especially as an important DoD tool for addressing NDS objectives.

Finding: DoD CTR Program activities were subject to disinformation campaigns. However, DoD CTR Program successes also allowed partners to “punch back” against disinformation with strong counter narratives.

- **Recommendation:** Strengthen strategic communication strategies to help anticipate, address, and mitigate effects of disinformation by competitors and regional adversaries.

Finding: DoD CTR Program-funded advisors embedded in partner organizations directly informed partner decisions, including those regarding sustainment.

- **Recommendation:** Based on the Office of the Secretary of Defense’s (OSD) partner country priorities and available resources, identify additional opportunities to embed DoD CTR Program-funded advisors and potentially add more advisors in new partner countries and new functional areas to increase U.S.-partner cooperation, improve partner capacity, and support sound sustainment practices.

Finding: The DoD CTR Program promotes interoperability on two levels: between the partner and the United States where U.S. forces are present, and more predominantly, on a regional basis, to educate regional leaders on how to reduce threats.

- **Recommendation:** The DoD CTR Program component programs should continue to build interoperability with U.S. and allied forces into bilateral and multilateral engagements, where appropriate, through threat reduction engagement.

Finding: The DoD CTR Program contributes significantly to operational and institutional capacity-building that supports and integrates CWMD, U.S., and partner objectives.

- **Recommendation:** The DoD CTR Program enterprise should explore opportunities to continue to facilitate the integration of CWMD objectives and other U.S. partner objectives and emphasize, where appropriate, its secondary SC-like effects.

Finding: DTRA took important steps to internally coordinate and deconflict its activities, but inadequate joint focus on targeted outcomes resulted in missed opportunities.

- **Recommendation:** Consider formally institutionalizing coordination and deconfliction through integrated planning efforts and assigning a select number of SC professionals to the DoD CTR Program to enhance understanding and collaboration with other OUSD(P) Global Partnerships (GP) and GCC planning and resourcing processes.

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To what extent is CTR effectively planned, resourced, and implemented?

Finding: The establishment of regional and country DTRO's was critical to improving relationships with the DoD CTR Program and U.S. interagency efforts, but their respective roles might need to be clarified and documented in some cases.

- **Recommendation:** Ensure that DTROs are structured to meet the specific needs of DTRA coordination in a partner country, that their roles are well-designed in accordance with program phase, and that their relationships to the SCOs are also clear.

Finding: There may be opportunities for U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) - in its role as the DOD CWMD coordinating authority - to play a larger role coordinating CWMD partnership activities across DoD. Currently, USSOCOM has a limited number of staff devoted to CWMD partnerships.

- **Recommendation:** Consider including professionals with expertise in the DoD CTR Program, the International Counterproliferation Program (ICP), SC, and other CWMD-building partnership activities in the USSOCOM CWMD Fusion Cell to strengthen linkages between USSOCOM, the GCCs, and DTRA to improve planning and coordination.

Finding: Recent efforts to facilitate coordination and communication between DTRA and the GCCs are starting to make a difference in combined planning efforts but more dynamic planning linkages are needed.

- **Recommendation:** Continue to expand efforts to integrate CTR and other DTRA programs into GCC and DSCA planning constructs by ensuring that relevant DTRA program and country-level representatives are involved in key GCC/DSCA planning events and workshops.

Finding: GCCs and the SCOs in-country lack clarity on which CWMD authorities should be leveraged under different circumstances.

- **Recommendation:** OUSD(P) should spearhead a focused leadership discussion on the DoD CTR Program and SC authorities and then issue clarifying guidance, and should continue to encourage GCCs to take advantage of existing opportunities, such as DTRA's annual BPC Workshops, to learn about CWMD authorities.

Finding: The DoD CTR Program has not, in some cases, adequately accounted for partner capacity to absorb training and equipment in the context of the partners' normal operational tempo. Partner countries face challenges in independently sustaining CTR provided capabilities over the long term.

- **Recommendation:** The DoD CTR Program component program and project managers should continue to work systematically with DTROs, GCCs, country teams, and partner officials early in planning and implementation to tailor activities to partner absorptive capacity and to incorporate realistic flexible sustainability solutions into plans.

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Finding: Although organizing the DoD CTR Program by component program might be optimal for DTRA, this organizational approach can be confusing when the GCCs – which are organized by region – reach out to DTRA for points of contact and information.

- **Recommendation:** Consider modifying HQ/DTRA’s organizational framework by creating country teams with an individual lead to cut across DTRA programs and align with related GCC organizations.

Evaluation Results: In accordance with DoD Instruction 5132.14, “Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise,” the DoD is applying recommendations and lessons learned from this evaluation to make adjustments to policy, programs, and resource allocation decisions, including the following:

- *Implementing Recommendations:* DoD developed an internal action plan, in coordination with primary stakeholder organizations to implement recommendations of this evaluation. The design of DoD CTR Program efforts – both ongoing and prospective – is informed by the findings and recommendations of this report.
- *Contributions to the SC Performance Management Framework:* DoD disseminated the evaluation report’s findings across the Department to support learning from DoD CTR programming globally. RAND’s initiative design documents, to include theories of change, logic frameworks, objective trees, and indicators for case studies will serve as tools for the planning and design of future DoD CTR Program activities.